What to Make of Mayaguez *Roger Morris*

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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Gunning for Henry
John Osborne

Dirty Water in the Bulrushes
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Broken Down Money Machines
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On Erik H. Erikson
MILLICENT BELL

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TRB

from Washington
June 14, 1975

Hot Stuff

If you have lost track of the Big League scoreboard on nuclear arms, here is how things stand. The United States has nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union, but don't let that fool you; each country has the capacity to destroy the other no matter which strikes first. Each can absorb a first strike and then retaliate. If they hit us first we know that we can demolish them, and they know that if we hit *them* first, they can pulverize us in 24 hours. That evens things out, doesn't it? All is balanced and shipshape.

Naturally in this situation the military brass of both sides want to keep on building more bombs because that is the way the military mind works; and besides that they want to build up the size of conventional forces too. We have just ended our military adventure in Vietnam so the Defense Department is asking $104.7 billion for next year—$15.7 billion over last year's astonishing total. Not since the high point of Vietnam involvement has there been a similar increase.

As that fine legislator Stuart Symington chattily told the Senate the other day, recalling that he was once himself secretary of the air force: "I have known every Secretary of Defense fairly well since the beginning; Secretary Forrestal once told me that if you gave the Joint Chiefs all they wanted there would be no money left for anything." They are proud of their work and need funds to carry it on. If they didn't get the money it would be wasted on welfare payments and things like that.

Most people don't know, or don't want to know, the power of these bombs. Symington the other day asked Hubert Humphrey how many Hiroshima-type bombs he supposed our present nuclear stockpile would make? Humphrey made it large because of the way the question was put and guessed 8000 to 9000 bombs. The right answer is 655,000 Hiroshima bombs with our stockpile.

Yes, today one plane in one mission can drop more explosive power than both sides dropped against each other in the five and one-half years of World War II. Hot stuff, eh? No wonder it inspires the Pentagon to do even better.

On the side the United States carries on a busy little business of selling armaments around the world. This shows good commercial common sense; it lowers inventories of out-of-date US weapons; it brings in money to the Treasury; it gratifies the pride of allies, small nations and client states who want to throw their chests out like big powers. Last year the US sold $8.6 billion of arms to 136 nations.

As a commercial enterprise the United States can take modest pride in the way it has all but cornered this lucrative market: bombs dropped on almost any small native tribe or insurgent faction are apt to have "Made in USA" on them: sometimes in special cases we have armed both sides—Honduras and Nicaragua for example, in 1957; El Salvador versus Honduras in 1969; Pakistan and India; Greece and Turkey. If you look through the books there are 12 recent wars where the US armed one or both sides and we are broad-minded about it too; sometimes we armed two dictatorships who fought each other, sometimes a couple of democracies, sometimes a democracy versus a dictatorship. We aren't narrow-minded if their money is good. We are building up Iran now in the Persian Gulf; they are rolling in oil money. In short, according to Sen. Proxmire (who for some odd reason disapproves of our trade and calls it "extraordinarily dangerous"), the United States exports more than half of all the arms exchanged between nations, some 54 percent. This is twice the export of Russia, nine times France, 15 times Britain. Gratifying, isn't it?

Dealing with nuclear arms and trafficking in all these conventional weapons is apt to distort anybody's thinking as illustrated after the *Mayaguez* affair. Here, for example, is Dr. Kissinger telling a press conference that he guesses *Mayaguez* will teach the rest of the world that nobody can push the United States around. Yes, by Jingo, we can lick Cambodia.

Another manifestation came recently in the interview of Defense Secretary James Schlesinger with *US News and World Report*, centering around South Korea and what would happen if North Korea attacked. We have a protective fondness for our client state, South Korea, which reminds us of our lost hopeful South Vietnam, and it has a dictator at its head, too, President Park Chung Hee. (North Korea also has a dictator, Kim Il Sung.) There will be no funny business, about "advisers" this time in Korea; we have 40,000 US troops there perched right on the dividing parallel, "the hottest spot, so to speak," says Sen. Stennis anxiously, "now in the Pacific area."

You can imagine how eager Americans will be for another little war out there in Asia and Secretary Schlesinger talks tough. This time there will be no shilly-shallying about, he says, with protective reaction and strategic hamlets and all that guff; American military will strike right at the heart of the enemies' power. This is not an off-the-cuff interview, it is printed and revised and doubtless cleared with the President: "It is necessary to go for the heart of the opponents's power," Schlesinger says, "destroy his military forces rather than simply being involved endlessly in ancillary military operations."

That presumably means smashing centers of population and cities. But would he use nuclear weapons? They don't frighten Schlesinger. In a just published report submitted to Congress regarding possible attack on US troops in Europe, he explicitly says that he is ready to use them. Of course efforts should be made to make the enemy understand it is defensive, to reduce the risk of all-out nuclear war.

"However," he says, "the attack should be delivered with sufficient shock and decisiveness to forcibly change the perceptions of Warsaw Pact leaders and create a situation conducive to negotiations."

We like that ornate bureaucratic style: "shock and decisiveness" is particularly good. Using nuclear weapons, or striking right at the heart of the opponent's power, ought to produce shock all right. Moscow's *Pravda* asks what kind of talk this is in détente, but so what? The Ford administration is talking tough.

How many Hiroshima bombs is it we have in our stockpile?

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Thinking Out Loud

The Senate last week did not have a great debate on defense and foreign policies. It was not even a *good* debate for most of two days that were supposed to be devoted to a meaningful discussion of America's post-Vietnam military commitments. Nonetheless the affair was far from a failure. Worthwhile floor debate did take place, enough at least to suggest that the Senate could become a constructive forum. A major weakness of the performance was that less than 20 senators fully participated, most of them members of the Armed Services Committee, whose defense procurement bill was the pending business. Thus such old-timers as John Stennis, Barry Goldwater, Strom Thurmond and Stuart Symington were on hand along with Democratic newcomers Sam Nunn and freshman members Gary Hart, Patrick Leahy and John Culver. The only outsiders to play major roles were Cranston and Kennedy, responsible for the original idea, George McGovern and freshman Dale Bumpers. The participants ranged the political spectrum.

In a short appearance, Birch Bayh expressed a fairly prevalent view of US foreign commitments—"We must look beyond the written word and see what the commitment was designed to accomplish when the commitment was first given . . . we commit ourselves to certain things our allies also are committed to conduct. Thus we can go forth together if it is not a unilateral kind of thing, but a concerted effort to accomplish certain basic principles." Tested by that standard, even the sacrosanct NATO alliance took a beating on the Senate floor. Goldwater said Europe had become weak, failing to take steps to aid in its own defense. He questioned the idea that an attack against any NATO country should be considered an attack against the US. Adlai Stevenson said the NATO treaty requires economic as well as military cooperation. Stevenson thought the competition among NATO allies to extend credit to the Soviet Union, and thus subsidize each nation's exports, in the long run fosters the Soviet military might that NATO's army then has to match. Pete Domenici chimed in that NATO countries are going to have to realize that they, too, are affected by what happens in distant places like Japan and Korea where now only the US seems to be taking on responsibilities.

Along with NATO, the treaty commitment to South Korea drew comment. Nunn said his Armed Services manpower subcommittee

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wanted a reexamination of the US presence—now some 42,000 army and air force personnel plus tactical nuclear weapons. In Cranston's opinion US support of dictatorships is a dangerous distortion of traditional foreign policy principles. Bayh made the point that the US "was committed to maintain the freedom of the Korean people, but when I look at what [President] Park is doing there, I wonder how much freedom they have?" Goldwater reminded his colleagues that the US interest in Korea related to concerns about Japan, and that, no matter how distasteful a government might be, the first aim of policy should be the security interests of the US.

Overhanging much of the discussion were attitudes toward the Soviet Union. Goldwater spoke enviously of Red China, its ability to mobilize a peasant population and the fear that such success engendered in the Soviet Union. Kennedy admitted his belief that the US holds both nuclear superiority and conventional parity with the Soviets. John Glenn annnounced he had seen nothing positive from the Russians, except smiles and handshakes. Bumpers of Arkansas raised a question about potentially dangerous provocations by the US. Referring to a news story on US submarine missions inside the Soviet three-mile limit, Bumpers asked, "what happens if the Soviet Union . . . should sink intentionally or through inadvertence one of our submarines . . . This raises terrible possible consequences to world peace."

Though Stennis, Thurmond, Goldwater and others supported the defense budget, the Ford administration had no defender on the Senate floor. Republican Brock saw no coherent policy coming from the State Department. Kennedy, recently returned from the Middle East, said leaders there were unsure what the future role or intentions of the Ford administration are. In his brief appearance Hubert Humphrey spoke of some broad trends. "The US has not grown weaker," he declared, "other parts of the world had grown stronger . . . The oil embargo did more damage to parts of the world than any kind of military attack." Then, with the sense of discovery and shame only Humphrey could pour into it, he declared "the world has changed . . . Nationalism has become a greater force than internationalism, whether Communism or democracy." Old anti-Communist Goldwater was to agree with Hubert in a statement on Red China, a country he said had succeeded not because of its devotion to Communist principles but rather its adjustment to the force of traditional oriental family values.

"This country needs to do some thinking out loud," Humphrey declared. "We ought to discuss our strengths and weaknesses out loud . . . Our past mistakes," he concluded, "were of judgment and not of purpose." Senate debates settle nothing. Votes on amendments are the normal focus of Senate action. Yet seeds planted during the two-day defense debate may yet germinate and grow into something worthwhile.

Up the Army?

Last year Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger initiated a plan to up the number of active army divisions from 13 to 16 by September 1976. This increase would be made within the army's present manpower ceiling of 785,000 but at an added cost of about $4 billion to equip and deploy the new units. By eliminating about 50,000 headquarters and support jobs and converting these "spaces" into combat positions, three new divisions would be created. Schlesinger's rationalization for the increase is not based on any new "threat"; instead, he argues that "we should return to the 16 active and eight reserve division objective" that was set in 1964. He believes that "in the aftermath of Vietnam and the changeover to the all-volunteer armed force, we basically went too far in reducing our active-duty ground forces."

Much has changed since 1964. At that time military planning was based on preparations for simultaneous wars in Europe and Asia and a minor police action elsewhere: this was the so-called two-and-a-half war strategy. Now, says Schlesinger, "we should be able to deal simultaneously with one major attack and one lesser contingency. The major contingencies that we consider for force planning purposes are attacks in Central Europe and Northeast Asia, although we do not ignore such areas as the Middle East." In other words Pentagon planning nowadays is based on having to fight one-and-a-half wars.

The army has also lost two important missions since 1964: air defense and tactical air support. Eleven years ago the army had 107 air defense batteries; today there are none in the continental United States. (There are still three in Alaska.) The air force took over tactical air support of ground forces with fixed-wing aircraft and left helicopter support to the army. These changes plus the American withdrawal from Indochina leave the army with fewer missions now than it was presumed to have in 1964. Why, then, does the Pentagon want three more army divisions?

No doubt there is a bureaucratic dynamic at work. Rare is the general who asks for less troops, and the officers who lead the American army have seen it halved from 1.6 million men in 1968 and are understandably concerned about the institutional consequences of further retrenchment. But the army does not exist simply for the welfare of the army: its purpose is to support the foreign and military policies of the government. Generals usually claim they do not have enough, but it is the responsibility of Congress, which the Constitution charges to "raise and support armies," to decide what military forces are needed to meet national objectives.

"There is nothing magic about the number 16," says Gen. Fred Weyand, the army chief of staff. "It certainly doesn't represent a no-risk condition; but, coupled with

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our eight reserve component divisions, it does provide a significantly lower risk security than does our current force and at a price which the nation can afford." Whether or not the nation can afford the cost of 16 divisions, to put it bluntly, is none of the general's business: that determination must be made by our elected representatives. On the other hand it is his business to calculate the putative risks involved in various military force structures, but this he has not done. Instead he has simply asserted that there is "an urgent requirement to at least regain that prewar posture" of 16 divisions without detailing why so large a force is necessary for a postwar army that has fewer missions around the world. Where will those troops be used?

The United States has had no serious confrontation in Europe with the Soviet Union since 1961, and while the Soviet army has increased in size, these new divisions have been directed against its border with China. The government of Thailand has requested that all American troops be withdrawn; Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos has recently announced that he is having second thoughts about American bases in his country; South Korea, according to the Defense Department's manpower report, has "developed a significant military capability, especially in ground forces, which we now believe are adequate for defense against North Korea." Yet even though the geopolitical situation in 1975 is much different from what it was before the Vietnam war, the army has not been deflected from its 1964 manpower goal. Moreover, Weyand argues—again without proof—that "we need and should have a 30 division army."

Another controversial aspect of the army's manpower request is its proposed deployment of two additional brigades to Europe. There are now four army divisions and a separate brigade stationed on the continent, and two more brigades would increase the army's strength to the equivalent of five divisions. This addition would be made within the army's present European garrison of 200,000 by eliminating some 18,000 support positions. One certainly cannot argue against the elimination of fat in our European military establishment, but by what logic should such savings accrue to the army? A decision to deploy two more brigades ought to be based on sound political and military reasons and not simply on some sleight-of-hand with manpower planning documents.

Critics have long contended that the American military establishment was too fat, and the army has now proved them right with its proposal to field 16 divisions with a 785,000-man army because it fielded the same number of divisions in 1964 with 972,000 troops. The service now acknowledges that it can be more austerely manned, but instead of deactivating unnecessary troops and returning the savings to the taxpayers, it is seeking three more divisions. Schlesinger candidly admits: "I promised Gen. Abrams [the late army chief of staff] that if the army would undertake a determined effort to achieve a major increase in combat power within the then-authorized active-duty personnel strength (*i.e.*, 785,000), I would do everything I could to maintain that strength for the next few years." Given the nature of bureaucracy, one would not expect the army to undertake such initiatives on its own, but should the military posture of the United States be determined by such bureaucratic horse trades or should it be based on the military missions it is assigned by the civilian leadership? Does the army have an inalienable right to a certain portion of the United States Treasury or must any such claim be based on its role in achieving national objectives?

Fundamental questions are at issue in the Pentagon's proposal to add three divisions to its post-Vietnam army. The air force reportedly is working on a plan of its own to convert superfluous support troops into four new air wings but is waiting to see if the army proposal succeeds before going public. So, if Congress does not scotch the army plan for three more divisions this year, it will have to face comparable expectations from the other services after having set an unfortunate and costly precedent.

Peter J. Ognibene

White House Watch

Gunning for Henry

During President Ford's absence in Europe, from May 28 to June 4, several of the senior assistants who stayed in Washington were more accessible and had more time than usual for talk about attitudes and concerns at and near the peak of White House power. The account that follows is mostly derived from these conversations, in part from interviews that preceded the President's journey, and in smaller part from reported events and statements on the trip.

A major topic of the conversations was the relationship between the President and Henry Kissinger. Let it be said at once that I brought the subject up; the assistants didn't. The Ford-Kissinger story is largely a media creation. It persists in print and in broadcasts mainly because journalists and commentators continue to be fascinated and to assume that their readers and listeners are fascinated with the supposition that Gerald Ford is taking charge of foreign policy in ways and to an extent that he didn't even attempt when he succeeded to the presidency and that Richard Nixon never attempted, either. A related supposition is that in the process Mr. Ford is deliberately and necessarily changing and diminishing Secretary Kissinger's role. It was noted in this space in April that the President had

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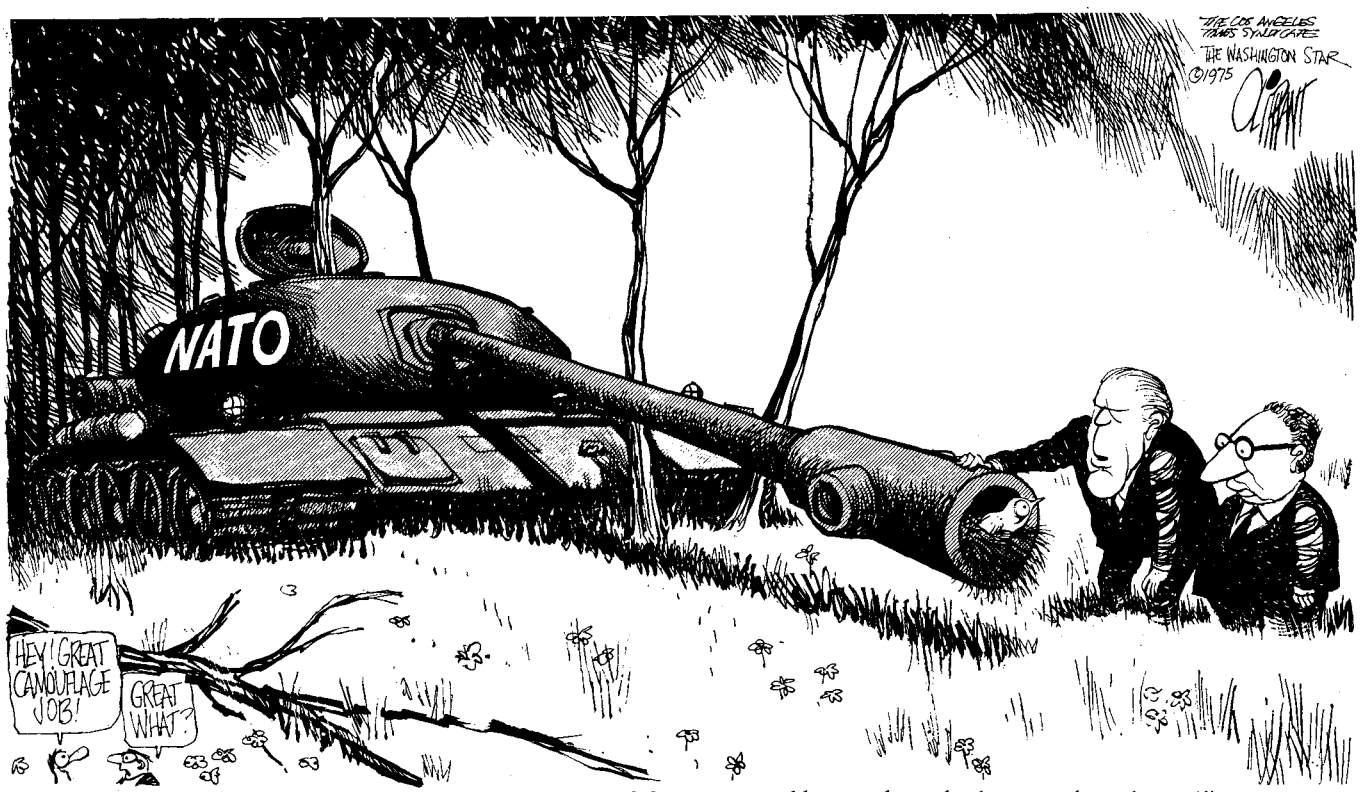
begun the previous February to say in interviews, with great emphasis, that *he* was determining and conducting US foreign policy. Mr. Ford was quoted saying of Henry Kissinger that "although he is extremely valuable and I think most important, it doesn't mean that he makes the decisions." There really hasn't been much more to say on the matter since then, but the reports keep turning up and here I am back at the subject.

On the morning of the President's departure for Europe, *The New York Times* front-paged a long account to the effect that Mr. Ford was looking beyond Kissinger to other advisers. Godfrey Sperling, the respected chief of *The Christian Science Monitor*'s Washington bureau, reported from Brussels that the President "is beginning to put his own unique, 'instinctive' stamp" on US foreign policy and that "for Henry Kissinger there is simply no option but to step aside a bit." Aldo Beckman of *The Chicago Tribune*, one of the sharpest reporters on the White House beat, wrote in Brussels that White House staff chief Donald Rumsfeld and Press Secretary Ron Nessen were trying and failing to keep Kissinger out of the public spotlight during the European trip. Aboard the President's plane on the flight from Washington to Brussels, Rumsfeld with an uncharacteristically silly stunt encouraged a suspicion that he's been behind a lot of the effort to derogate Kissinger. When he talked to pool reporters on the plane, Rumsfeld insisted upon being identified only as "a senior American official very familiar with NATO who was traveling with the President." Rumsfeld was US ambassador to NATO from early 1973 until President Ford recalled him to the White House last fall, a fact that irritated reporters promptly noted in quoting the "senior American official." Kissinger, who had preceded the President to Europe, dotes on being identified as "the senior American official" aboard *his* plane, and Rumsfeld's plaint to reporters on the President's plane that questions about a diminished role for the Secretary of State were "mischievous" had a somewhat hollow ring.

The fact that gives the subject some continuing legitimacy, however empty much of the discussion of it may be, is that any reporter who wants support for the suggestion that the President is subtly downgrading Kissinger can find it in respectable White House quarters. Without seeking that kind of support—I remain convinced that the supposition is hogwash—inquiries at the White House during the President's absence developed quite a lot of information about senior staff attitudes toward Henry Kissinger and the Kissinger-Ford relationship.

There is in truth a substantial, fairly widespread belief among some of the President's closest assistants that Mr. Ford *ought* to diminish his reliance upon and identification with Henry Kissinger. Where reports based upon private information to this effect go wrong is in jumping to the conclusion that the President is doing what some of his people think he should do. He just isn't. At the NATO summit sessions in Brussels, for instance, and in press conferences there and elsewhere explaining the Ford purpose and performance, Kissinger figured as prominently as he ever has.

Most of the staff feeling that the President should reduce Kissinger's role and end what some of the assistants consider to be Kissinger's "monopoly" is



"We came here to reassure you of our responsibility—er, would **you** *please do the same thing for* **us***?"*

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connected with two circumstances. Alone among the President's staff advisers, Henry Kissinger has a solid, regularly scheduled hour with Mr. Ford every weekday morning when the two are in Washington. Over the course of a typical Washington day, Rumsfeld spends more time with the President than Kissinger does. But neither Rumsfeld nor any other assistant has that sacred, unbroken hour with Mr. Ford. Although this makes for plain jealousy, a more substantial objection is heard. It is that too many snap decisions are made during these private talks, without proper "staffing out" and sufficiently broad discussion. The other target of complaint is Kissinger's unprecedented dual function as both Secretary of State and the President's assistant for national security affairs. With subtle encouragement from Kissinger, Richard Nixon invented the duality in 1972 as a way to make the secretaryship acceptable to Kissinger. Both men understood that Secretary Kissinger would never tolerate an assistant for national security affairs who would try to dominate him as he had dominated Secretary of State William P. Rogers. One might suppose that President Ford settled the question of continuing the dual assignment when he said in a television interview on April 21 that Henry Kissinger is a "unique" individual who "can very successfully handle" both jobs and will continue to handle them. An assistant who is much involved in such matters said the other day that to his knowledge nobody on the staff has actually dared to recommend to Mr. Ford that the functions be divided. That's hard to believe, considering that one of the assistants who holds most firmly that the functions should be divided is Philip Buchen, the President's chief counsel, first law partner and hometown friend. Buchen is also among those who feel strongly about that morning hour. But that particular complaint is muted nowadays, compared to the amount of private discussion accorded it when Mr. Ford first succeeded President Nixon. It's the dual job of Secretary of State and staff assistant that remains in active discussion and objection very near to Mr. Ford if not in his presence.

An illustration of how wishful White House talk can get translated into alleged fact is to be found in the previously mentioned *New York Times* piece. Grave note was taken of the fact, disclosed in White House staff photographs, that Rumsfeld and Counsellors John Marsh and Robert Hartmann attended a National Security Council meeting called to consider the *Mayaguez* seizure by the Cambodian navy and what to do about it. The presence of Marsh, Hartmann and Rumsfeld was said to prove that the President is broadening the number and variety of advisers to whom he turns in foreign policy discussions, with the implication that here was one more sign of diminished reliance upon Henry Kissinger. An anonymous White House assistant was quoted to this effect. The quoted assistant couldn't have known much about the NSC and the *Mayaguez* discussions. Rumsfeld frequently attends NSC meetings and, on those and other occasions, advises the President on foreign policy. There's nothing new about that. Philip Buchen, who wasn't mentioned by the *Times*, attended the *Mayaguez* meetings because what the law and the Constitution did and didn't permit the President to do was a live question. John Marsh, whose many responsibilities include oversight of White House dealings with Congress, was present because the matter of how and when to inform congressional leaders of what the President decided to do was an important aspect of the problem. Hartmann was there because of the political implications. His and the others' presence at the *Mayaguez* meetings was not intended to establish a precedent and signaled no change whatever in Henry Kissinger's preeminent standing with the President.

Note: I wrongly reported last week that Ron Nessen was not told of the *Mayaguez* seizure on May 12 until just before he announced it at 1:50 pm. President Ford told him about it in the presence of several other assistants at around 9 am and asked him what he'd do about it. Nessen isn't saying what he recommended. I was wrong again in saying Nessen did not deliberately withhold the information at his regular 11:30 am press briefing, when he didn't mention the seizure. He withheld it from both the press and his own staff.

John Osborne

"I hardly know where to start . . ."

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Who Loses?

Mail Muddle

In July 1970 Congress passed the Postal Reorganization Act, dedicated to the proposition that a government corporation, free of many political constraints, would do a more efficient, cheaper job than the old Post Office. One of America's leading postal authorities, Wayne Fuller, writing in his book *The American Mail* in 1972, said: "Tired of the responsibility of managing the postal service, unwilling to find the money necessary to rebuild the old establishment after so many years of neglect, and most of all worried about the postal deficit, which even in 1970 still did not claim nearly as much of the government budget as it had in 1890, Congress gave up its control of the system, not even bothering to keep its veto power over increases in postal rates."

Last week administrative law Judge Seymour Wenner, whose previous experience was as a hearing examiner for the Civil Aeronautics Board and Federal Power Commission, issued a ruling on new postal rates, which if accepted by the Postal Service Board of Governors, will profoundly change mail service in America. The chickens suddenly all came home to roost.

The Wenner ruling is disguised as a break for the consumer, the lowering of the price of a first-class stamp from 10 cents to 8.5 cents (how, incidentally, does one buy one 8.5 cent stamp?). That would result in a loss in revenue of $750 million and would be recovered by soaking the other three classes of mail, especially second and fourth class mail users. Second class makes up about 10 percent of all mail; fourth class has already lost more than 50 percent of the package business to the more efficient and cheaper private United Parcel Service. Both classes are already declining in volume. In the case of second class, under Judge Wenner's ruling, the average cost of mailing a copy of a magazine will be 11.7 cents. In general second-class rates would double. Weekly magazines are unlikely to be able to survive at these rates, and this will cause pressure to cut circulation or to go biweekly, monthly or even quarterly. All magazines and newspapers that depend on mail delivery will be at an increasing competitive disadvantage to other media, particularly TV, for advertising.

The average American household mails about 200 letters a year (mostly bill payments), so it would stand to save about three dollars under this recommendation. Any household mailing a few parcel post packages of five pounds would lose more than it saves on letters to the new 67 percent higher rates for packages. Those that continued to subscribe to magazines or buy from mail order concerns would also be adversely affected. The gainers in the revision of rates would for the most part be the largest users of first-class mail, namely banks, utilities, oil companies and department stores. Whether those savings would be passed on to the customers is an interesting unanswered question.

The administrative ruling goes beyond even the recommendations of the officer of the commission who allegedly represents the "public interest" at the ongoing rate hearings. It is precisely this point—what is the public interest?—that is at stake. It's not a technical matter, but a political one that must be worked out in the give and take of politics. The officer and Judge Wenner have concluded that the cost allocation system of the Postal Service is wrong and that "Everytime a person pays 10 cents to mail a first-class letter he is contributing almost two cents to pay the costs of other services." Is this really so, or are these rates necessary to support the postal delivery system generally?

The Postal Service is a wondrous animal, having offspring in every hamlet of America. The Postal Service should be much more cost efficient in its mechanization of mails and in labor policies, but few would expect it to save by closing down local post offices. Further, traditionally the Congress has supported the idea that educational materials, including newspapers and magazines, farm journals and so on, should be allowed entry to the mails at lower rates. Until 1970 it was always considered worthwhile to spend public funds for our primary communications system. The Postal Service is now fighting for its existence, pending a giant bail-out (the deficit this fiscal year is over $800 million, with still existing subsidies of over $1.5 million). The Wenner ruling would further increase this deficit, because volume decline in second and fourth class mail brought on by higher rates would prevent the full recapture of the $750 million reduction in first-class revenue. This would then generate a new cycle of higher rates and lower volume.

Changes are needed in the Postal Service, but this is not the way to achieve them. As things now stand the Postal Rate Commission will forward its decision to the board of governors of the Postal Service by the end of July. If they approve new rates would become effective in September. In the meantime there is the possibility that the Postal Rate Commission itself will turn down this deceptively simple measure and follow the recommendations of the Postal Service for increases in all classes of mail to meet soaring costs. There is then the prospect for new legislation in Congress in the winter, long studied by the Hanley House subcommittee, to compensate for the worst aspects of the reorganization. Allowing rates to be set by experts, whose conception of the public interest is an idiosyncratic matter, has been an unforeseen and high price to pay for the 1970 Postal Reorganization Act in terms of the diversity of printed publications available to the public, and quality mail serivce.

Robert J. Myers

Mr. Myers, the publisher of this journal, is the author of *The Coming Collapse of the Post Office* (Prentice-Hall).

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What to Make of Mayaguez

by Roger Morris

The *Mayaguez* rescue seems one of those events destined to shrink from banner headline to footnote. It has been easy to see the raids in terms of the vulnerable psychology of the Ford administration in the aftermath of the final disaster in Vietnam. A frustrated President acts forcefully to shore up his sagging domestic constituency and the country's international credibility. "Our thirty seconds over Tokyo, and it felt pretty good for a change," as one senior State Department official put it.

The Congress, press and public, all with visibly mixed feelings about Vietcong flags flying over Saigon, were glad to share in the therapy. "The main thing that has happened . . ." explained James Reston in *The New York Times*, "is merely that Uncle Sam went out of Cambodia and slammed the door . . .." Three weeks later Washington is again preoccupied with a messy, inglorious battle over energy policy, defense budgets and a sick economy.

Yet if the *Mayaguez* affair was a fleeting thing, it did provide a vivid illustration of some more enduring realities of American foreign policy. As an exercise in crisis management and credibility, it was, on closer examination, scarcely the success it seemed. As a political event it was remarkable for what did *not* happen after nearly a decade of dissent and legislation against arbitrary presidential action in foreign affairs. And in a sense, seen against other, less publicized but far more serious crises, the raids were an ironic symbol of Washington's growing powerlessness to deal wih the new international dangers of the post-Vietnam era.

Outwardly it was the way power is supposed to work. Shielded by fighters from the *Coral Sea*, a company of marines goes in, guns blazing, and the 39 hostages come out safe—an economy of force reminiscent of one of the more alluring Pentagon formulas of the 1960s, the "neat surgical strike." But was the operation neat or even surgical in the sense that it was the military force that extracted the crew? Running through the *Mayaguez* crisis was much of the muddled, impulsive policymaking that marked the worst and the most ineffectual of the US intervention in Southeast Asia over the last decade. Even taken on its own terms, the operation does not seem a reassuring demonstration of the force option in international politics.

As so often in the Vietnam war, there would be in the *Mayaguez* incident puzzling questions about Washington's ability or good faith in managing the delicate balance between diplomacy and force. Notes requesting the crew's release went to the Cambodian Embassy in Peking and to the Chinese government on the afternoon of May 12, within 12 hours of the seizure. Officials now say both notes were returned without response 24 hours later, though neither Secretary of State Kissinger nor President Ford apparently saw the return as a rejection of diplomacy. "It [the return] didn't mean anything," Kissinger subsequently told reporters off the record. "The Chinese have good Xerox machines."

Yet less than 24 hours later, on May 14—only two days after delivery of the notes and the same afternoon the US asked UN Secretary General Waldheim to intercede—President Ford ordered the raids. The assault began less than two hours before Phnompenh broadcast its "order" to the *Mayaguez* "to withdraw from Cambodian waters." Lengthy and propaganda-laden, the statement was obviously in the writing prior to the US attack. Four hours after the broadcast the crewmen were aboard the destroyer *Wilson*, having sailed in a small boat the 30 miles from Sihanoukville. Lost in the superfluous squabbles raging at the moment and in the later self-congratulation was the strong probability that the Cambodians had released the crew not under marine guns, but rather as a diplomatic decision.

After the crisis, however, the diplomacy of those two days was dwarfed by the details of the fighting. About the most important diplomatic communications presumably yet sent by the Ford administration, there was casual confusion. The President, said White House aides, had "no idea" whether the Cambodians had received the May 12 note. At the same time Kissinger was telling the press, without further comment or questions, that both messages got through and that the Chinese "counseled restraint" by Cambodia. It was not just a question of principle in giving diplomacy a chance. Even officials supporting the military action were worried that once a diplomatic solution was in process, the raids might have backfired disastrously. Had the crewmen not already been released, a Cambodian regime that had decided to give them up on its own initiative (or perhaps at Chinese prodding) might well have reneged under military coercion, particularly

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since the marine assault on Tang Island missed the crew entirely.

"It was almost a mini-Marigold," said one concerned official, referring to the code name of December 1966 secret peace negotiations that collapsed when US planes bombed Hanoi in the midst of promising diplomacy by the Poles. In any event, say several sources, Washington operated in the *Mayaguez* seizure with almost no diplomatic intelligence on the possible intentions of the new Cambodian regime. Lower level State Department officers with long experience in Cambodia were excluded from the center of crisis management, much as the handful of officials analyzing Hanoi or the Vietcong were absent from the critical decisions by Presidents Johnson and Nixon on the war. Gerald Ford in 1975, as his predecessors had so often before him, seems to have struck in Southeast Asia not as a last resort after exhaustive diplomacy, not in some genuinely informed calculus of the adversary's intentions, but by what must have been a largely intuitive judgment that he had no other choice.

Whatever the timing and motivation for the raids, the tactical military planning turned out to be as questionable as the diplomacy. For the umpteenth time in Indochina, in a bloody sequence from the Tonkin Gulf to the Tet Offensive, American forces were committed to battle with fatally inaccurate military intelligence. According to Pentagon officials the marine company landing to face savage resistance on Tang Island had only misleading, low definition satellite photos and no up-to-date reconaissance. Whether Pentagon planners were inhibited by fears of alerting the Cambodians, or whether 48 hours was too short a time to organize the proper intelligence, the lesson for any observant government is that the United States is not especially adept at such operations. The precedent for *Mayaguez* in this respect was the futile Son Tay POW raid into North Vietnam. Like *Mayaguez*, Son Tay would have been "successful" only if the captors had decided to release the prisoners independently of the military action.

So too were there troubling doubts about Washington's command and control of the military strike. Official sources are unanimous that communications between Washington and the task force in the Gulf of Siam were nearly instantaneous, with constant radio contact. Yet at perhaps the most critical point in such a crisis—the moment when the objective has been accomplished and operations must be carefully measured to avoid embroilment exceeding policy—the administration's simplest communications failed. Between the Pentagon's receipt of the news that the crewmen were returned and the relay of that crucial message to the President, who immediately ordered the strikes to cease, there was a lapse of 21 minutes. It was during those 21 minutes that the carrier planes bombed the Cambodian mainland at an airfield near Sihanoukville.

In the official version the mainland raid was to protect the marines still on Tang Island, though the logic of those tactics would have dictated either a preventive strike timed with the intitial landings more than three hours earlier, or simple surveillance of the field to attack any Cambodian T-28s attempting to take off. The bombing was obviously a punitive gesture. But the explanation for continuing the strikes well after the crew had returned seems far more disturbing. "The momentum of the operation was too strong," said one high official in words redolent of August 1914, "to turn it back at that point." It was as if military "momentum" had somehow carried US planes to attack, for good measure, the Russian vessels *after* they had turned back from the blockade of Cuba during the 1962 missile crisis, or President Eisenhower had allowed the bombing of the Suez Canal in 1958 to cover the marine landings in Lebanon. Whether indulgence of loose bombing plans or inadequate civilian control, the Ford administration's handling of the mainland attacks in the *Mayaguez* crisis may quite possibly have been its most irresponsible act in office.

But then apparently Washington barely averted a still more bizarre step—the use of B-52 bombers if strong headwinds had not brought the *Coral Sea* into position for the operation by May 14. Confided to reporters traveling with Kissinger to Vienna four days after the crisis, the strategy in deploying the B-52s would have been to "frighten" the Cambodian government away from making humiliating demands on the US. "It was the only means at our disposal [without the carrier]," Kissinger told the reporters, again off the record. Assuming this was more than posturing, the questions of objective and sense of proportion in such an option strain the imagination. How many B-52s? With what intensity on what targets, military, urban, rural? How long, in defiance of specific congressional prohibition, would it be before the Khmer Rouge, with their own hard-earned expertness in strategic bombing, surrendered the crew? Here it is 1975. The Indochina war is a bitter lesson learned. Yet we are suddenly back in June or December 1972, or February 1965, intent on intimidation beyond our interest and probably beyond our political capability to sustain.

All this must be fairly weighed, of course, against the administration's perspective on the crisis. The President and his advisers were no doubt in the grip of the *Pueblo* tragedy, whatever the differences between the two cases. They were anxious to avoid further "defeat" in Indochina, which they saw as demoralizing at home and emboldening enemies abroad. The operation was conducted, explained Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger in his baroque style, for "purposes necessary for the well-being of this society."

Moreover the cultural gap inevitable in such encounters was probably deeper than ever; a Khmer

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Rouge reported to be emptying Phnompenh to create an isolated agrarian communism may well have seemed utterly irrational to a former congressman from Grand Rapids. And as always even the best and the brightest civilian officials are hostage in a crisis to the quality and candor of their military staffs.

But Washington's blunders, if thinly veiled by publicity, were neither academic nor excusable. To potential future players in the credibility and force option game—whether Arabs, Israelis, North Koreans, the Soviets or the Chinese, all of whom have to take a more precise view of such events than the American Congress or press—the demonstration may have been just the opposite of what was intended or is now widely supposed. Our crisis diplomacy can be seen as uncoordinated or hypocritical, our military intelligence chronically flawed, White House civilian command and control perhaps unreliable, escalation to B-52 strategic bombing an almost reflexive resort. Those precedents might deter some governments with room to be cowed by our sheer capriciousness. More likely the *Mayaguez* presents a future adversary with the prospect of a diplomacy he cannot trust and a military operation neither side can measure, the ingredients not of credibility, but of catastrophe.

The loose control and excesses of the crisis were almost certainly easier amid the ready acquiescence of the Congress. Before it had basis to judge either the situation or US actions, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee unanimously endorsed the use of force. Except for Gaylord Nelson (D, Wisc.) and George McGovern (D, SD), who spoke out, and Edward Brooke (R, Mass.) who quietly sent the administration a list of questions, the Senate seemed generally prepared to be, as Sen. John Stennis (D, Miss.) put it, "as severe as necessary." The House followed suit, its bold freshmen for the most part suddenly mute in the mysteries of national security.

Few on Capitol Hill will quite say it, but President Ford clearly violated the long-fought 1973 War Powers Act, the language of which expressly obligates the President to consult the Congress "*before* introducing US armed forces into hostilities . . .." "We were informed, not consulted," observed Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D, Mont.). But the Congress shows no disposition to investigate the crisis either for its military-diplomatic implications or for the serious practical and Constitutional ambiguities it exposed in the war powers legislation.

The *Mayaguez* raids laid bare in that respect a reality in the politics of foreign policy that many liberals have denied or ignored. It is that the congressional majorities that produced the war powers and anti-bombing legislation of 1973-74 and even the broader assertion of foreign policy prerogatives in this session have not been anti-militaristic, or even anti-imperial in the sense of the gun-boat politics of the *Mayaguez*. The specter haunting most of the Congress was not so much arbitrary presidential foreign policy as the great *faux pas* of that system—land embroilment in Indochina. Once that danger had receded, for most members the point was made.

"We took a bath in the Gulf of Siam," said one congressional aide about the *Mayaguez*. But the uncritical congressional acceptance of the crisis was only part of a larger surrender already in motion. The recent reversal of the Turkish military aid cutoff, the defection of liberals like Sen. Walter Mondale (D, Minn.) from support of the Mansfield amendment to reduce troops in Europe, the genteel co-opting of the Senate Special Committee on the CIA—all signal an abiding fear the Congress has of sustaining even its partial responsibility in foreign policy.

Perhaps the most insidious effect of the *Mayaguez* experience, however, was to obscure the far more urgent international problems facing the Ford administration, problems in which even efficient military force or good faith diplomacy appear increasingly useless. To the extent that the *Mayaguez* cast foreign policy in terms of US credibility, it slowed understanding that the real crises are mainly *within* rather than between nations, and therefore beyond our reach. Thus the collapse of NATO that *Mayaguez* was supposed to help forestall proceeds from political and economic instabilities in Portugal or Italy or Great Britain that not even Kissinger's brilliance can remedy. So also, the food and energy crises, which Kissinger flew off to Europe to

NUMBERS GAME

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address after *Mayaguez*, are at their core vast problems of domestic politics and social organization in both the industrialized and poor countries. No external force will bring the land reform or population control or technological transformations that will determine the shape of the world in the last quarter of the century. It was far more important for the future foreign relations of the United States, for example, that Kissinger recently proposed new concerted action in developing alternative energy sources and a one billion dollar world food reserve, even if his schemes cannot be imposed by Washington. But it was about the *Mayaguez* that columnist Joseph Kraft concluded "that the government can do some things and do them fairly well."

Even the Middle East, presumably a central audience for the lessons of *Mayaguez*, is becoming less amenable to such crisis management. The recent domestic turmoil in Lebanon, with far-reaching consequences for both the Palestinian guerrillas and Israel, is likely to be much more important than any demonstration in the Gulf of Siam.

Seen in a longer view the *Mayaguez* crisis still belongs to that Nixon era of foreign policy when sudden swings to savage unpredictability in using military force were thought necessary to maintain our security. Ironically it was a younger and more detached Henry Kissinger who warned in 1961 that, "to make of ambiguity a principle of conduct is to court disaster." But if the ghost of that earlier Kissinger pointed to the perils of the *Mayaguez* policy or cautioned against its self-deluding aftermath, no one seems to have heard.

Shattered Hopes of Getting Richer Quick

The Broken Down Money Machines

by Milton Gwirtzman

Last fall the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors, Alan Greenspan, observed that the worst victims of the current recession were the stockbrokers. Greenspan had the cheek to make this remark before an audience of pensioners and union members called to the White House to prepare for President Ford's economic summit. He was roundly booed, and his statement took its place in the annals of economic *gaffes* alongside that of former Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson who, several recessions ago, compared unemployed workers to "kennel dogs who sit on their haunches and yelp."

Yet Greenspan's point was statistically, if not politically, sound. As trading volume dropped in a collapsing market, the incomes of brokers, which come from commission on purchases and sales of securities, plummeted. It was not unusual for a broker who earned $100,000 in 1973 to take home $10,000 in 1974. Brokers lost additional sums on stocks purchased for themselves, and if their firms went under—as 140 member firms of the New York Stock Exchange have in recent years—they were out not only their jobs but the capital they had invested in the partnership. A survey last January by a New York City magazine discovered one broker selling bicycles, another enrolled in medical school and a third running a delicatessen in Brooklyn. All happy enough to be out of their profession.

The plight of stockbrokers reflects a broader economic phenomenon: aside from those out of work, the chief sufferers from the recession in both financial and psychic terms, have been the wealthy—the 600,000 citizens (about one percent of the nation's taxpayers) who make more than $50,000 a year. Most are professional people and corporate managers, with a few heirs thrown in. Few of them are superrich, but all earn considerably more money than they need. Theirs has been a silent suffering. No politician has championed their cause. Since their occupations are virtually recession-proof, their current incomes, and thus their basic standard of living, are unimpaired. They have not had to mortgage their homes or pawn their jewels. No one really knows just how big a bath they have taken during this recession, and they are not about to tell.

Their reduced circumstances show in small ways. They are tipping less. They have begun to attend the sales that fill the newspapers these days. Development

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fund campaigns of prestigious universities—drives that seek pledges of $1000 or more—have bogged down. Wealthy alumni, short of cash, are reluctant to donate stocks, because current depressed market values offer no opportunity for tax deductions. One doesn't hear many investment tips these days, and when discussions at suburban cocktail parties get to investments, the most you hear is someone saying he converted all he had to cash many months ago. He is usually lying.

The net worth of the rich has been devastated primarily by the breakdown of the money-making machines that, with the help of loopholes in the tax laws, had been created and promoted by the investment community since the early 1960s. For years promoters of private investment used their considerable ingenuity to devise attractive new ways for wealthy people to try to become wealthier. The steady inflow of new cash from the well-to-do supplied a good portion of the essential liquidity that kept market values going up. The consistently favorable investment climate of the '60s, high in growth and moderate in inflation, created a climate of optimism that quickened the natural desire of affluent citizens to make a great deal of extra money, with a minimum of risk, in the shortest possible time. First came the mutual funds, holding out the chance to participate in the growth of a large number of stocks, under "expert" management, with a single investment. Then came the boom in new issues—stocks that came out at 10 on Tuesday and rose to 20 by Friday. Next the high technology stocks, which seemed to be able to make money for their investors simply by using "space" or "ecology" in their titles.

As each fad ran out of gas, the investment community conjured up another one. By the end of the '60s, the well-to-do were being bombarded with proposals to put their excess cash into new money machines: land syndicates, real estate investment trusts, tax shelter deals in cattle ranches, oil operations, timberland, citrus fruit groves, cotton warehouses, jet aircraft and railroad freight cars. Dazzled by the tax breaks available (high deductions when held, capital gains treatment when sold); enticed by the leverage factor, which gave a dollar of their money the earning power of 10, they gave little consideration to what might be in store for them if economic conditions changed and made the investments unprofitable.

Real estate, for example, was considered the safest and steadiest source of increased wealth, no matter what turbulence might shake the economy. As the Institute for Business Planning told readers of its 1971 handbook *How to Use Tax-Free and Tax-Sheltered Investments:* "Land is potentially the most profitable investment that can be made. It seems certain to become more valuable as an expanding economy and a rapidly increasing population, with rising income, fully motorized and ranging over large areas to satisfy its living, working and playing needs, steadily presses against a fixed supply of land." If further persuasion was needed, the rich found it in their own homes, which were rising in value faster than anything they owned.

Large numbers of wealthy citizens became part of the condominium fad that swept resort areas such as South Florida, the Maryland beaches and the Southwest in the early 1970s. Others joined syndicates that purchased land in the country or in the path of suburban expansion. The syndicate intended to subdivide the land, sweeten it with roads and sewer lines, then sell out in a few years, at a nice profit, to builders of shopping centers and city folk seeking second homes.

The affluent investor willingly allowed the syndicate to assume heavy mortgages and commit him to pay steep yearly development fees, because both mortgage interest and development costs could be deducted to reduce his taxes. Faith in a profitable outcome was bolstered by the fact that the promoter, who put the syndicate together and selected and managed the property, gallantly took a piece of the deal. What many did not realize until too late was that he did so with their money. The price at which the property was "bought" included a massive front-end load of as much as 30 percent, called a "beneficial acquisition fee" or something equally innocent. This went to the promoter at the outset, allowing him to take his share of the property without putting up a nickel. But it also meant that the property had to rise by the amount of the load before the investor could be even.

Shortly after the Arab oil embargo in the fall of 1973, the real estate market went into shock. Deprived of cheap gasoline, fearful of continued shortages, the "motorized society" decided to work and play close to home. To people worrying about being laid off and struggling to pay bloated electric bills, a second home in the mountains or a condominium by the sea became an impossible dream. By the end of 1974 in Florida alone, 35,000 finished condominium apartments stood vacant. With buyers disappearing, investors in real estate discovered they would be shelling out mortgage payments and development costs long after the date they had expected their properties to be sold. Panicked, they tried to cash in their interests, only to find that under the agreements they had signed they could be reimbursed only out of the syndicate's cash flow—which, of course, was zero.

Some of the biggest losers were those who put their money into real estate investment trusts (REITs)—mutual funds that owned real estate instead of stocks. The REITs borrowed money at, say, 6 percent from banks and bondholders and loaned it out at 12 to 18 percent to builders and developers. Under the tax laws 90 percent of the resulting profit was required to be paid out each year to the shareholders. The prudence and stability of the REITs seemed to be assured by the prestige of their sponsors—usually banks like Chase Manhattan, Marine Midland and Continental Bank of Chicago. To a man with $20,000 in loose cash and no

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knowledge of the real estate market, REITs were a chance to participate in the really big transactions of the real estate boom. Lots of moneyed people took a chunk of their nest eggs out of savings and loan associations (whose payouts were sharply limited by federal regulations) and turned it over to the REITs.

At the high point in 1973 the REITs owned more than $20 billion in properties, and the market value of their stocks was almost six billion dollars. Awash with capital and anxious to make even more money, many disregarded the prudent lending policies of their sponsors and made marginal investments. In mid-1973 interest rates, already high, headed toward the stratosphere. The REITs soon discovered that what they had to pay to borrow money was fast approaching the highest rate they could charge to lend it. At the same time contractors, hit by sharply rising costs for building materials and construction labor, were unable to meet their loan repayments to the REITs. Forbidden by law to operate the properties, unable to sell them except at distress prices, the REITs had no incentive to foreclose on defaulting debtors. Thus in many parts of the country, buildings financed by the REITs were simply abandoned, half-finished hulks. Between January 1973 and February 1975, the market value of the stock in REITs dropped an average of 78 percent. Some fell as much as 97 percent, making REITs the biggest losers in a terrible market. Wealthy investors were left with little more than glossy colored pictures of some seaside Xanadu, where nobody lived and which no one had the slightest desire to buy.

Tax Shelters. The most attractive feature of cattle, timber, oil and other tax shelters was the artificially large deductions investors could take, for depreciation and other expenses, in the early years of the project's life. Ronald Reagan paid no income taxes in 1971 to the state of California, which he governed, because of "losses" of this nature on cattle ranches in the Rockies. Yet deductions alone were not enough to persuade the rich to inhabit the shelters; normally they had to put up at least a dollar for every dollar they could write off. What kept the shelter game alive was the assumption that once the tax benefits had been squeezed out, sales could be made at a capital gain.

The recession blew most shelters over with hurricane force. Timber deals collapsed along with demand for housing. When consumer resistance began to drive down the high price of beef, the cost of raising and feeding the steers exceeded the price they could bring at the market. When the transportation industry felt the pinch of the energy crisis, investors in jet aircraft, who had expected to first rent them (while taking full depreciation benefits) and then sell them, found they could do neither. From $3.5 billion in 1972, the value of new tax shelters registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission dropped to less than $900 million in 1974, almost all in the field of oil drilling.

Stocks. The second floor of the building where I work is given over to the local office of Merrill Lynch. It was easy to tell which of my fellow passengers on the up elevator were headed there last year. They were the well groomed ones with the anxious looks, making a visit to their stockbroker. When the down elevator stopped at two, their anxiety had changed to sadness, often desperation. Occasionally I asked them how the stock market was doing. They shook their heads morosely.

Between January 1973 and December 1974, the securities listed on the New York Stock Exchange lost $400 billion, 44 percent of their total value. Since the cost of living rose by over 18 percent during the same period, the real loss—what you could buy with what was left if you sold your stocks—was more like 62 percent. (If this year's market "recovery" is also discounted for inflation, only half that loss has so far been regained. (In terms of constant dollars, the Dow Jones industrial average is still 55 percent below its real high, set in December, 1968.)

Almost every system investors used to beat the market came to grief during this period. Those who chose companies producing things in great demand and short supply, such as oil drilling equipment, found shares of Schlumberger, one of the leading producers, dropping from 134 to 73, and American Hoist and Derrick from 13.5 to seven. The classic measure of a stock's worth—the ratio of its market price to its earnings—was in some ways the most misleading. US corporations reported record earnings in 1974, yet their stocks kept failing. Stocks that had risen steadily in price when selling at 25 or 50 times earnings in the go-go years dropped to five and six times earnings, ratios so low that investors were certain they could go no lower. They were wrong. In part this happened because much of every company's earnings reflected the swiftly rising prices of its products. Once it became necessary to stock up on raw materials, at *their* inflated prices, the profits would disappear.

The only way to make money in the 1973-74 stock market was to go short—*i.e.* borrow stock, commit to sell it at a later date, wait until it had fallen in price, cover the commitment by buying at the lower price, and pocket the difference. But short selling required a degree of sophistication that was beyond most investors. It also went against the whole ethos of the stock market, which is that investors profit from the success, not the failure, of the companies they buy into. There was something perverse—almost un-American—about selling short when your own brokerage firm was sending herds of steers across the nation's television screens to declare it was "bullish on America."

Commodities. Yet all these tribulations did not shatter the hopes of getting richer quick. At the depths of the

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market in real estate, tax shelters and stocks, affluent investors were still ready for something new. For a brief time last year they found it in commodities futures. Shortly after the wheat deal with the Soviet Union in 1972, futures prices began a sudden rise, which sharply accelerated after the oil embargo. The move was powered by the same inflation and raw materials shortages that spelled distress and uncertainty for the industrial economy. Commodity speculators feed on disaster. A hurricane in the Louisiana sugar cane fields, a drought in India, frost in the Midwest at harvest time, make them rub their hands with glee. 1974 saw each of the occurrences and, in addition, the culmination of a steady rise in world demand for basic foodstuffs, as people in developing countries began to earn enough to eat more than rice and fish.

In the 18 months beginning September 1972, the index of all commodities futures climbed 100 percent. Large numbers of starving stockbrokers began to shift to the commodity field. They urged their customers to liquidate their stockholdings, no matter how low they had sunk, and recoup their losses in the commodity game. "Send more money," one wrote, "the water's warm." ContiCommodities, the brokerage arm of Continental Grain Co., took large ads in *The Wall Street Journal* to advise prospective investors that "with its excellent leverage, the commodities futures market can play an important role in your fight against today's double digit inflation." By the fall of 1974 over $500 billion was tied up in commodities futures, four times more than a year before and half the total value of the stock market.

Until the other money machines broke down, most well-to-do investors had wisely avoided commodity speculation, with good reason. The factors that make futures prices rise and fall are both arcane and unpredictable. They include such things as the weather in Poland's sugar beet fields, the monthly grindings of cocoa in Ghana and whether the Peruvian government is going to allow fishing off its coastal waters for anchovies, which compete with soybeans as a cheap source of protein. Rumors play an important part in the buying and selling decisions of floor traders, and there is a lurking suspicion that some futures markets can be manipulated.

Commodities have another disadvantage compared, for example, with stocks. The smallest amount that can be purchased is very large—5000 bushels of wheat, or 30,000 pounds of cocoa. If General Motors falls from 85 to 29, as it did in 1973-74, it can conceivably be held until it climbs back up again, even if it might take 10 years. But if you purchased one contract for 30,000 pounds of December 1975 cocoa last October, when the price peaked at 66 cents a pound, you are down $6600 today. If the price does not come back by next December 1, you must sell at a loss or a truck will pull up to your home and deposit 15 tons of cocoa on your front porch.

There proved to be one fatal catch to the commodities boom: it took place in a series of extremely volatile swings. A single contract for soybeans, which had risen $38,000 between January and June, 1974 fell $33,000 by the end of October. Through most of last year a single silver contract rose and fell the "limit"—$2000 a day. The leverage ContiCommodities boasted of did allow a speculator to put up a relatively small amount of cash for his purchase—five to 10 percent of the price. But to ride out these swings and arrive at higher ground, he had to be willing to put up an initial stake of at least $50,000—more than even most affluent investors were willing to risk. Those whose "stakes" were too small to ride this kind of roller coaster, and were unwilling to put up added cash when things got rough, were swiftly sold out by their brokers at the low point, and lost everything.

The great shakeout began on October 6—"Black Monday" in the commodities field—when the government announced it had cancelled approval for two huge grain shipments to the Soviet Union. By raising fears of export controls, the action dislocated all commodities markets. Prices slid rapidly. Nervous investors, assuming their brokers had sold them out, called to ask how much they had lost. "We can't tell yet," they were told, "prices haven't fallen low enough to attract any buyers." For the next few days investors were locked into limit declines of $2000 to $3000 a day per contract. Some lost their entire investment in a week. The 47 percent decline over the next four months in the general commodities index took care of the rest.

The rich were injured in the recession because they went into their deals with their hands out and their eyes closed. With the exception of those for whom investment is a profession, wealthy Americans are far too busy with their own demanding jobs to give any but the most cursory analysis to investment opportunities. The busier they are the more they tend to sign over full discretionary power over their investments to their broker or money manager, who has more than a normal interest in turning holdings over quickly. On rare occasions this practice results in their being bilked, as in the recent Home-Stake oil drilling scandal, in which the promoters bribed investment counselors to steer money into their nonexistent oil properties. Over $100 million was lost by 2000 wealthy notables, including Andy Williams ($340,000), Alan Alda ($145,000), Bob Dylan ($78,000), Sen. Jacob Javits and Barbara Walters ($28,500 each.) Usually it simply gives control to a money manager who has more than a normal interest in turning the holdings over quickly.

Yet had investors spent weeks researching deals, it is doubtful they would have done much better. The annual reports of corporations have become little more than slickly illustrated puff pieces. GM's report for last year, when its stock dropped 50 percent, concluded that "despite the turbulence and adversity of this extraordi-

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nary year, GM again demonstrated its ability to adjust to change, to develop more efficiency and economy in its products and its plants, and to merchandise aggressively." Reading *The Wall Street Journal* or the financial pages of *The New York Times* is a little better, but not much. These papers are very good at explaining what *has* happened, but predictions of what *will* happen (which is, after all, the name of the game) are carefully hedged by conflicting opinions from differing experts.

The fundamental failing of the rich was psychological. They were chasing a series of manufactured dreams. Very few stopped to ask themselves what might happen were the economic climate to change and the substance of their investment—as opposed to its tax and financing features—go sour. By the time they had totaled their losses, they had learned some fundamental economic lessons: that every investment involves a risk; that every dollar of leverage available in a rising market costs an extra dollar in a sinking one; that you cannot always assume a greater fool will come along to buy an asset for a higher price than you paid for it.

Or had they learned these lessons? The money is still burning holes in their pockets. Was it not just last week that we read about the newest fashion in options trading . . . a million and a half new contracts now being written each month . . . the "hottest new game in town" . . . a cheap way to speculate, with very little capital . . .?

Watch out, fellows, here we go again.

Crocodile Tales

Dirty Water in the Bulrushes

by Kathryn W. Burkhart

In the Sudan, women walk to the Blue Nile, the White Nile or the River Nile every morning and evening carrying leather bags or large clay pots. They fill them with about 20 liters of water, put them on their heads and carry them home. There they add seeds or leaves, bits of bark or root to the muddied water they have collected. Within two to three hours the dirty brown water is clear and drinkable. Chemical tests show that after 12 hours it is totally pure. Somehow nature's simple old tools have eaten every drop of dirt and bacteria that had polluted the water. It is an ancient, seemingly magic ritual that continues to purify drinking water for Sudanese families every day.

"There is danger for the Sudanese in collecting water," says Dr. Samia Al Asharia Jahn, a faculty member at the University of Khartoum who for five years has been collecting data on the native methods of water purification and the effectiveness of those methods. But the danger to which Dr. Jahn is referring is not pollution. "The danger is . . . crocodiles. Especially during the flood season, the crocodiles are abundant. Since we have the dam it is not such a big problem, but the small crocodiles still come over the dam and they are very deadly when they come to the edge of the water."

Taking water from a faucet as we do seems much safer than gathering water in a dirty, crocodile infested river. But recent reports warn us that the risk we take drinking water from the tap ultimately may be just as dangerous. Despite mechanical and chemical depolluting schemes that are far more sophisticated than those used by the Sudanese, including sand filtration, permanganate oxidation and chlorination, the water we drink may nevertheless contain many more potentially dangerous pollutants and contaminants than the water drunk in the Sudan.

We have serious, urgent water problems relatively new to mankind as a result of industrialization and expanding population. Most of our current water treatment methods have been around, without major improvement, for 60 years. They were designed to eliminate harmful waterborn disease bacteria, such as typhoid and dysentery bacilli and cholera. They do little to detect or fight more insidious contaminants whose effects on users and the balance of life may not show up for decades.

Purifying our drinking water becomes more difficult as time passes. Scientists explain that we are inventing dangerous chemicals faster than we can deal with

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them—even faster than we can determine their effect on human beings. Every year our industries are originating at least 500 new chemicals—pesticides, synthetics, adhesives, surface coatings and solvents—and are releasing them into our surface and groundwater supplies. Any community that gets its public water supply from a river containing any industrial discharge or runoff from agricultural areas using pesticides and herbicides may be dangerously affected by these contaminants—even if it has an elaborate purification plant. The plant was not built to cope with such new problems.

Once contaminants get into any of the water around us, it is likely to get into our drinking water as well. "Water is a system," says Dr. Robert Pierson, a research biochemist and environmentalist at the University of Pennsylvania. "Whatever we do to one part affects the other parts. Substances washed into our waterways, lead leached by pipes, industrial discharges into rivers, toxic residue from pesticides in the soil, which get into fresh water bodies and kill or damage marine life—all these things threaten life support systems on the face of the earth. Life came to terms with itself over millions of years, Dr. Pierson says. "In that biochemical evolution, life has found certain chemicals useful, but it has taken millions of years to make its decisions. Here we are now releasing 500 new chemicals every year! Life doesn't know how to deal with them, and we run serious risk of fouling up that fine, highly molecular machine by adding all these new molecules. It is something like trying to adjust a very fine Swiss watch by opening it up, turning your head and sticking in a screwdriver."

Studies by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Environmental Defense Fund released last fall revealed that 66 dangerous chemicals, "carcinogens" all potentially able to cause or promote cancer, had been found in the drinking water of New Orleans. EDF suggested that New Orleans has a 40 percent higher incidence of cancer than the national average in part because of the presence of carcinogenic substances in the public water supply drawn from the Mississippi River.

Dr. Robert H. Harris of the EDF and Dr. Samuel S. Epstein of Case Western Reserve, who conducted the EDF study, believe the carcinogens they found are residuals of industrial wastes dumped into the Mississippi upstream. They found that the local water treatment processes failed to detect or remove many of the waste substances from the public water supply. Moreover they concluded that chlorination of the water for the purposes of purifying it actually converted many harmless chemicals into dangerous ones. Since over 100 million people in the US drink chlorinated water and chlorination is widely used as a disinfectant in sewage treatment plants, the research raised serious questions about the safety of drinking water throughout the nation. It also served as impetus for the passage of the Safe Drinking Water Act, which was reluctantly signed into law by the President early this year.

Although Drs. Harris and Epstein were glad to see that bill passed and signed into law, they are critical of government agencies in charge of implementing and regulating water quality standards. "The Food and Drug Administration is clearly a captive of the industry," says Dr. Harris. "Thousands of chemicals released every year are never tested for their effect on human beings. Meanwhile the EPA says that they are delaying implementation of the Safe Drinking Water Act because they first have to determine a 'safe' level of carcinogens. The overwhelming conclusion of the scientific community is that there are *no* safe levels of carcinogens. These discharges must be completely eliminated, not just reduced."

EPA spokesmen say that on the basis of current knowledge, the benefits of chlorination far outweigh the potential harmful effects of compounds that may be created by the process, and there is not enough evidence at this time to require sweeping changes in current water treatment processes. They are however conducting a national study of the problem of carcinogens and other dangerous substances in drinking water. These results—to be drawn from the monitoring of 80 cities—should provide some of the evidence needed to begin making decisions on changing the treatment process.

Our water treatment methods, authorities agree, do need upgrading. What methods will be adopted is a matter of debate.

Some scientists are urging that we examine nature's oldest tools—biological tools—to see if they can't be used to solve the immense problems facing us today. Biological treatment—possibly the management of marshes planted with bulrushes and higher green plants—may prove to be the most effective, cheap and ecologically sound way to treat polluted waters in both industrialized and nonindustrialized nations.

The potential for biological treatment of water systems was the subject of a three-day conference sponsored by the Academy of Natural Sciences and the University of Pennsylvania last March. More than 100 scientists, city planners and environmental experts from a dozen countries came together to explore the best, most workable ways of biologically improving the quality and use of water, alone or in conjunction with conventional techniques. The three-day conference was called the International Conference on Biological Water Quality Improvement Alternatives.

"Interest in treatment systems using the natural cleansing ability of water, plants and animals is going to increase as costs of standard chemical and mechanical system continue to rise," says Edward W. Furia, Jr., a former regional administrator of EPA and conference chairman. "Substantial improvement of American

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drinking water supplies, municipal sewage and industrial pollution through conventional control is prohibitively expensive, plus it uses a great deal of energy since it relies on machines and pumps. These biological systems are no substitute for keeping pollutants out of the water in the first place, but they have tremendous potential for helping to undo the damage already done without further damage to the environment."

Currently many biological systems are at work in this country. Nore than 4000 municipalities already use some simple form of biological water purification in conjunction with other techniques, such as aeration lagoons where algae help to remove organic pollution. Dr. Harold R. Shipman, chairman of the United Nations Subcommittee on Water Resources and director of water supply and waste programs for the World Bank, estimates that there are more than 1000 biological water stabilization ponds in the United States alone, with uncounted numbers in the rest of the world. But scientists from here and abroad who have been at work on little publicized projects using higher green plants, namely bulrushes and reeds and a form of iris which is a granddaddy of our garden variety, brought fresh evidence to the conference of the ability of these plants to screen out, devour and bar toxic bacteria and chemicals. Others said that the microorganisms that cling to bulrushes, insects, fish, higher plants and even oysters may be the unsung heroes in any potential all-out war on water pollutants.

Projects using nature's tools in a managed way are being conducted, usually on an experimental basis, by small communities with available land or pond areas in Germany, Holland, Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia, Finland, Israel, Italy and Japan. Pilot projects have been operating in the US since 1972 and a design system combining conventional engineering techniques with biological treatment of the effluent from the wettest mine in the Northern Hemisphere, the New Jersey Zinc Mine in Friedensville, Pennsylvania, is currently up before the state of Pennsylvania for approval. If approved this system will be the first to use bulrush filtration of nonorganic industrial wastes on such a large scale in this country.

Most of these designs have been inspired by the findings of Dr. Kaethe Seidel, a limnologist (specialist in the biology of fresh water bodies), who heads the Max Planck Institute in Germany. Dr. Seidel has discovered in working with bulrushes since 1957 that these hardy biblical plants prefer clear water so much that they actually *create* the clear water by a metabolic process that devours various organic and inorganic pollutants.

In Krefeld, Germany Dr. Seidel has successfully used aritficial lagoons planted with bulrushes as part of a complex water treatment scheme that produces clear, potable water from the Rhine River. The Rhine is at least as dirty as the Mississippi, yet Dr. Seidel and her co-workers have discovered that Rhine water pumped through an artifically created bulrush marsh (the bulrushes are planted in gravel nets) emerges at the other end after a week or two of "travel" essentially free of nitrates, phosphates, sodium, potassium and calcium. Dr. Seidel reported to the conferees that bulrushes remove highly toxic organic substances like phenol; neutralize alkaline and acid waste waters; clean up waters polluted by food processing wastes; aerate water; provide a habitat for other living things like insects and fish, which also clean up pollution; reduce the amount of waste water; mechanically filter suspended solids with their root structures; absorb dissolved and suspended particles on roots; kill germs and produce no sludge.

Dr. Seidel also told of an installation of bulrushes in Urach that she has managed since 1964. There, waste water that includes unclarified sewage, domestic sewage, intermittent additions of extremely charged industrial wastes containing cyanides from a metal manufacturer and blood from a slaughter house runs first through sedimentation basins, then through stands of bulrushes, and comes out clean, drinkable and "delicious."

Commenting on Dr. Seidel's presentation, Dr. Ian McHarg, author of *Design for Living*, said: "All these years, we've misunderstood the Biblical story of Moses. God was not pointing to Moses, he was telling us to notice the bulrushes!" Another impressive story of bulrushes being used to cleanse waste water was told by Dr. Joost de Jong, head of the Netherlands Department of Water Quality. Dr. de Jong has applied the marsh water filtration principle to a large summer recreation area in the Flevoland polder. Since 1967 his marsh system (composed of reeds and bulrushes) has handled the raw sewage of some 7000 campers and 300,000 beach visitors every summer.

Dr. de Jong said that these experimental rush ponds are considerably less expensive to build and operate than activated sludge plants, and just as effective. He estimated the investment costs for a sludge plant serving two thousand people are more than six times the cost for rush ponds. The annual operating costs for sludge plants are more than four times the cost for rush ponds. One of the main maintenance expenses of a marsh filtration system, it seems, is the harvesting of the bulrushes and reeds. Dr. de Jong's problems with harvesting are reduced by the fact that his harvesters take the reeds into town for use in the weaving of baskets and chairs. One site is harvested by a farmer who feeds the roughage to his cattle.

In this country some of the most intensive research inspired by Dr. Seidel's work is being conducted by Drs. Frederick Spangler, William Sloey and C.W. Fetter at the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh. During summer months since 1972 they have been filtering some 7000 gallons of sewage per day from the town of Seymour in Outagamie County. Normally this sewage, which has already gone through conventional treat-

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ment in town, would be dumped directly in to the river. But the research team is improving the quality of that water by filtering it through man made trenches planted with reeds, a northern variety of bulrushes and iris. They have found, like Dr. Seidel and Dr. de Jong, that the filtration process reduces coliform and biological oxygen demand in addition to taking up considerable quantities of phosphorous.

"Across the midwest and in the southern temperate zones, a large number of towns and smaller communities have available land and in some cases, already have marshes or ponds," said Dr. Spangler. "They are ideally situated for the extensive use of marsh or pond systems for water treatment. For years, we have been trying to treat each community with the same methods, despite the fact that the waste of each community is unique.

"Construction of secondary and tertiary treatment [secondary treatment oxidizes organic matter and tertiary treatment removes nutrients], both in initial hardware and machinery and then in maintenance and operating costs, is very expensive. Here we have efficient waste treatment available at low cost and low energy expense that would mean the water quality in those communities and small towns could be greatly improved from the lower federally mandated levels currently required of them."

Scientists at the conference agreed that a strenuous case should be made for separating industrial waste from domestic wastes, and that pristine water throughout the country should be identified and protected from contamination. They also agreed that there is a dramatic and essential need for *applied* research (demonstration projects and pilots) into biological alternatives to water quality improvement.

Advocates and critics of biological techniques agree that a number of problems remain unsolved. The use of marshes and ponds demands a great deal of land and that makes them theoretically ideal for rural areas and nonindustrialized countries but probably unsuitable for urban areas where land availability is limited. Also a biological program must be developed to meet the varying conditions of each community—taking into account soil content, differing amounts of rainfall, sunshine and temperature. According to Dr. de Jong and Dr. Spangler, a marsh filtration system will have operational problems in cold weather. In Wisconsin's below zero weather, for instance, pipes that carry the sewage to the treatment marshes freeze during winter, and the plants themselves do not get much sunlight. If a town is not too big, however, Dr. Spangler suggests, it might be able to store up the waste during the winter and treat it in the summer. Dr. Seidel, who has found various breeds of the bulrush thriving year round in the arctic as well as in tropical areas, says that the magical plants function just as effectively in cold weather as in warm. She suggests that Wisconsin could solve its problems by using propane gas to heat up the sewage so it won't freeze.

Rapid development of marsh and pond systems is somewhat impeded by critics who say that if these systems disinfect the water effectively they can potentially produce contaminated fish or plants—and then how do you get rid of these products without contaminating ground water? Critics also point out that marsh and pond systems may not be as effective in removing toxic chemicals as other treatment techniques. Finally, critics acknowledge that while biological systems may be able to supplement or replace certain conventional processes, they may not be able to meet water quality standards by themselves.

Exploraton of the potential of biological techniques is also impeded by doubts that "old fashioned" biological processes can be as effective as high technology conventional systems. And as one cynic put it: "Consultants want to built the most profitable systems. What are the profit opportunities in biological systems? After all, without that Black Box stuff, what are you going to sell at a meeting?" There is also a problem in public acceptance ("Nobody wants their own waste supply fertilizing their crops or sitting around in their golf hazards!").

But the prospect of developing biological methods to purify our drinking water remains intriguing. Many enthusiasts of biological methods hope for financial support from the federal government—which is ultimately responsible for the purity of the more than 200 billion gallons of water flowing through pipes and conduits into the homes of 160 million people every day from community water systems. But Sen. Edmund Muskie of Maine, author of the 1972 Clean Water Act, chairman of the Senate subcommittee on environmental pollution, and himself an advocate of natural systems, cautions that the expenditure of the nine billion dollars in federal funds recently released will probably not be available for innovative projects. Federal expenditures for purification of drinking water are likely to be directed toward more conventional systems, he said, until the government is convinced of the practicality and applicability of biological systems.

"The notion that we can declare a moratorium now until new biological techniques have arrived is just too simplistic," Sen. Muskie said to one persistent questioner who urged present defective technologies be abandoned. "We can't simply mandate that everyone go back to using the two holer. It's just more complicated than that. If we just sat down and waited until all the research was in, it'd be too late to do anything."

Whatever the means, it is plain that we must assure ourselves safe drinking water. Unless biological or other methods are devised to remove from our drinking water the contaminants that escape treatment or are themselves created by existing depollution technologies, we may be forced to perceive the danger of crocodiles in the Sudan as small by comparison to the danger of the water we drink.

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Stanley Kauffmann on films

French Connection II

(20th Century-Fox)

Night Moves

(Warner Bros.)

Gene Hackman week. In two new films he plays detectives, private and public, and the single most interesting aspect of both pictures is the chance to see Hackman as two men in the same profession and how, aided by pretty good dialogue in both cases, he draws two sharply different characters. In *French Connection II*, a sequel to the 1971 blast, Hackman is once again Popeye Doyle, the foul-mouthed obsessed New York narc, now chasing his man to Marseilles. He drinks, eats, hunts, *smells* like a New York Irish thug whose good luck made his ugly thuggery fall into the service of the law instead of outside it. For Popeye to be a gangster, not one thing would have to be changed except the names and targets. In *Night Moves* Hackman is an LA private eye, an ex football star, 40, quiet, moustached, reasonably smooth, almost as soft as he is rueful. Neither of these characterizations is complex nor, for a talented man, difficult; but side by side they show a solid little spectrum of actor's imagination.

The script of *FC II* was written by Robert and Laurie Dillon and Alexander Jacobs, who spent most of their time devising chases and who really wrote only one character—Popeye. *FC I* gave us something of the fabric of New York as it ripped through that fabric; *FC II* just rips through some scenery. Popeye is sent on special assignment to Marseilles to work with the French police in tracking down the Mr. Big (Fernando Rey) who got away in *FC I*. So, naturally, Popeye has adventures. The picture is never quite sensible, but also it's never boring—except in one dreadful Saturday-afternoon-serial sequence in a drydock that should have been left there.

At one point Mr. Big has Popeye kidnapped and has him turned on to heroin in order to use withdrawal symptoms as torture. After Popeye is released, the French police lock him in a cell and make him quit cold-turkey. This sequence, an actor's dream, is very well done by Hackman and is well written, in his maunderings, to give him some character background and texture. (He was a failure in professional sports. Coincidentally, the other detective he plays was a sports success.)

Care has been taken to provide an equivalent for the famous car-chase sequence of *FC I*. This time Popeye chases a bus on foot through Marseilles, then chases a yacht as he scrambles along the docks of the Old Port.

Philippe Léotard, the man of *The Middle of the World*, earns a bigger salary here in a walk-through part as Mr. Big's lieutenant. Bernard Fresson is chestily sure as Popeye's French colleague. And there is a brief scene by Cathleen Nesbitt as a ravaged old drug addict who consoles the drugged Popeye in a squalid hotel and, while consoling him, steals his watch—the same beautiful Cathleen Nesbitt who made her London stage debut in 1910 and was once Rupert Brooke's beloved.

John Frankenheimer directed, with cool competence except for that drydock sequence, which was a mess even in the matter of who was where doing what. Frankenheimer's best touch is the absolutely last cut, the finish, which I won't describe but which made the audience gasp—rightly.

Night Moves was directed by Arthur Penn, his first feature since *Little Big Man* (1970), and was written by Alan Sharp, who did the (much superior) script for *The Hired Hand*. There are two parallel main actions. Hackman is hired by a rich Hollywood divorcée, a former actress, to trace her missing 16-year-old "wild" daughter; the trail leads Hackman through the lives of Hollywood stunt men to the Florida keys where the girl is living with her stepfather and his mistress and has slept with the former. This strand of the story also includes the smuggling of Mexican archaeological treasures and murder. The parallel story has to do with Hackman's private life: his discovery that his wife is having an affair, more because it's possible than because she's passionately driven. The affair, after the bump of discovery, is almost intended to unify Hackman and his wife as two equally lost sheep. The script's dialogue is well enough written, but as a structure, a detective story, it's everything that both *French Connections* were not—muddled, sententious, and dull. But lest you think that its muddle and sententiousness were unforeseen or accidental, Penn has given a long interview (*Sight and Sound*, spring 1975) to explain that it was all on purpose. Why? Because this isn't just a detective story, folks, it's an allegory. Of what? American moral decay, of course, and especially—you've guessed it—Watergate.

From the '30s to the '50s we had a spate of pictures—often Westerns, like *High Noon*—which were really allegories about the Little Man standing up to dictators. Lately we've been getting crime pictures—*The Gambler* and *The Sugarland Express* and *The Parallax View* and this one—that implicitly are about a larger moral morass than the ones they are dealing with explicitly. Almost always the symbolism is facile, the intellection slight, the resonance tinny, and the general effect less of rich allegorical statement than that the latter-day breed of university-trained movie men are satisfying their consciences while they make movie money.

In what way does the divorcée of *Night Moves* represent the corruption that led to Watergate? In no way that I can see. She is just one more instance of how film/theater people take their parish for the world. When Nathanael West wrote *The Day of the Locust* as a Spenglerian charade of America, he was very sure to include in it people from the

(continued on page 33)

Films Worth Seeing

Amarcord. Try to see the Italian-language subtitled version, not the dubbed version, of Fellini's funny-bitter-lovely poem.

The Middle of the World. A French Swiss film of a Swiss-Italian affair. Intelligent, extraordinarily well done, finally unsatisfying.

Monty Python and the Holy Grail. Le Morte d'Arthur mortified. The Middle Ages were never like this, alas. Amusing rather than hilarious, still these days. . . .

The Passenger. Anything by Antonioni must be seen. But what a grudging, terrible thing to have to say about a film by a master.

SK

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Skilled Evaluator

Life History and the Historical Moment by Erik H. Erikson

(Norton; $9.95)

The title of Erik Erikson's book of recent essays expresses a kind of pun growing out of our confusion between two ways of measuring human time. The clinician in his consulting room "takes a history" when he sets down the sequence of the individual life—yet he must know there is no way of shutting out the sounding of the clock of history in the public square. Indeed there is no such thing as a purely personal history, no life so private that it grows only from the germ of itself nourished exclusively upon individual relations. A large part of our most essential being is built out of ingested pieces of that exterior medium—life-in-the-mass, the culture, the social world—the historical whole that is at any "moment" paradoxically no more than everyone taken at once! And yet it is this begged and borrowed self that performs its own steps, makes its singular gestures as the Big Clock booms out its hours.

This ambiguity has occupied Erikson throughout his career as a student of human development. His famous description of the "identity crisis" of adolescence and his extension of the idea of personal reformulation into a full scheme of the Ages of Man went beyond Freud's picture of childhood's unfolding into the time when one becomes engaged with all that lies outside the family. Erikson explored the dynamics of a life span governed by the interaction between the epigenetic self and society. In *Childhood and Society* he presented the primary transition of the adolescent as a fitting together of original and acquired components, a process often painful and requiring a moratorium from decision-making, yet normally ending in the fusion that enables the individual to find his place and his work. The book came into being, of course, precisely because Erikson was himself so aware of the critical nature of this kind of crisis in America after World War II. He realized, in fact, that the difficulty that many of his young patients were experiencing was a significant generational trauma; when their crises of personal consolidation became protracted or even unsurmountable they manifested in neurotic exaggeration a condition as characteristic of the process of growing up in their time and place as had Freud's hysterics in Vienna at the beginning of the century.

The instant absorption of the phrase "identity crisis" into popular jargon reflected its peculiar appropriateness for many of its readers, an appropriateness that seemed to increase as time went on. In the '50s a whole generation found comfort in Erikson's account of their condition for he had suggested that crises and moratoria were normal stages in life and way-stations to the integrated self and to social function. He had also, from the start, seen the connection of life history not only with the immediate historical moment but with the accumulated historical moments of the American past. As an immigrant, an early refugee from Nazism, he was able to generalize about the special uncertainty of identity characteristic in a nation of immigrants and wanderers. It was part of the American "character" to be open to change, undogmatic and ready to move on, but also to have at the same time a contradictory nervous sense of the overbearing maternal tether, the *fear* of the pioneer mother transmitted to her children, resulting in moralistic rigidity, an inclination to stay put.

Erikson's awareness of the interaction of life history and the historical moment has made him able to yield even his own thinking to the pressure of new times, moreover—theory being as epigentic as the man behind it. The '60s exhibited new forms of youthful dissidence in political protest and the reaction against parental models in favor of diverse "countercultural life-styles." As Erikson remarks in a 1968 address published in the present volume, the "regression" of the adolescent crisis became, in this later context, an attempt to "reach back into unfinished ideological developments of the collective past in order to gather both the imagery and the energy necessary for a radical reorientation." He cautioned his fellow psychoanalysts that their services to the current generation must not consist of "attempts to neutralize powerful inner and outer forces of renewal by helping to make man more superficially and mechanically adjustable." The most recent of the essays in this new book, a lecture given a year ago, titled "Psychoanalysis: Adjustment or Freedom?", contains the further admission that "we cannot claim any more to heal clients in offices and clinics and to enlighten students and readers without directly intervening in the process by which values are formed and transmitted in society." He thus criticizes the ideal of adjustedness that so often has worked to enslave the sensitive to conditions that favor the ruthless and make communality impossible.

To Huey Newton he admitted in 1971 that his concept of the successful achievement of American identity had tended originally to overlook the role of its suppressed elements—the dependence in particular of the white American ego upon its projection of rejected selves (childish spontaneity, sensuality, etc.) in the stereotypic black image of racial prejudice. In a lecture before South African students in 1968, reprinted now, he had also spoken of this American pseudo-identity and the way our country may have:

> *been able to overcome its initial—and in a way, perpetual—uprootedness only by an almost mystical belief in a reconstituted future guaranteed by a sacred book and always handy weapons. Such a vision, and such habituation, would for the longest time obscure the cruel paradoxes of unfreedom built right into unprecedented freedom and progress.*

To the "bondage of man to fear of radical otherness" he preferred the release to which Freud in one way, Gandhi in another, had pointed the way. It was a suggestion that he made more elaborately in his Jefferson lectures delivered in Washington two years ago, while outside the lecture room Watergate was displaying the negative potential of American identity. Our cherished national identity was better seen as an instance of pseudospeciation, a process by which man, by a kind of group bad faith, gives himself an identity of nation, class, sex or race that is dictated neither by biology nor social reality. American identity, it was now clear, had battened on what it concealed and there were psychological relationships between the "*repression* of inner conflict in those who overadjust to power, the *suppression* of adversary opinions, the ready *oppression* of foreign people."

Somewhere between the anonymous

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life of the clinical patient and the progress of nations lies the life that has more than ordinary historical significance, the life of the leader or thinker who leaves his mark on an age precisely because he responds to it with such an instinct for its needs. Erikson's biographies of Luther and Gandhi and shorter sketches of famous persons that have appeared in essays—of Shaw, of Gorky, of Hitler, of Freud—have made him the first of the currently active psychohistorians. Perhaps his superiority lies in a faculty of imagination that is closer to that of a good novelist, for beyond the simplifications of theory there is always, for Erikson, a sense of complementarities in the life situation that are almost too numerous, too delicately woven together to separate by analysis. Thus he applies to his historic subjects the idea that life contains certain moments in which the self seizes upon a new form—the fit Luther is supposed to have had when in the monastery he roared "That's not me!" as though insisting upon a chosen rather than an imposed identity, was one; the strike in Ahmedabad in 1918 during which Gandhi first utilized the method of militant nonviolence was another. But each of these moments had complex antecedents not only of personal development but of conditions, circumstances, accidents, which made them fortuitously appropriate to millions of contemporaries.

His work as a biographer has made him a skilled evaluator of evidence, the documents upon which history is based that are themselves the products of personality and the necessities of "the times." An essay now republished discusses Freud's correspondence with Wilhelm Fliess as a ritual *a deux* that develops and cultivates certain formalized attitudes between two men and a "mutual correspondence transference" that serves a developmental purpose. Autobiographies are another special kind of psycho-historical source. One of Erikson's earliest biographical essays was a study of Hitler in which the language of *Mein Kampf* received an exegesis establishing its relation with the dreams of a million young Germans. In *Young Man Luther* he was confronted with the legend-forming functions of the reformer's own account of himself. Gandhi's *Truth* considered the function of the reports of witnesses whose memories, long after an event, have merged with history's version of it; in a postscript now added he reevaluates again Gandhi's own autobiography as one of those works written "for the purpose of re-creating oneself in the image of one's own method."

In his biographies, but also in the rest of his writing, Erikson has been aware of still another relativity contributed by the analyst-historian himself. Freud enjoined the "training analysis" upon the prospective analyst in order that he should understand the effect he might have upon the patient to whom he ministered and his own bias in response. But few analysts have written either theoretics or history in this same humility of spirit. Erikson, however, has introduced a deliberately studied self-consciousness into all his writing. He admits as an inextricable part of his subject his own responses to dissident youth, explaining how his personal experiences had prepared him to react. Or he notes the initiation of his own attraction to the figure of the founder of German protestantism at a life moment in his racially ambivalent boyhood when he first heard a Lutheran hymn. Most strikingly he continually explains during the *Gandhi* book how he felt about nonviolence even before he began to study the Indian leader; one of the most moving chapters is a 25-page letter that he calls "a personal word" addressed to his subject in which he explains to the man he never met the affinity he felt between the truth sought in psychoanalysis and the truth reached for in the nonviolent encounters of *satyagraha*.

Perhaps the most interesting piece here is a confessional one: "'Identity Crisis' in Autobiographic Perspective," in which he narrates how his professional and personal identity was achieved after a Germanic moratorium of artistic *wanderjahre*. He was, he also relates, a young person with special reasons to puzzle over his identity—brought up as the son of a Jewish doctor and his wife he discovered that his real father was a Dane who had abandoned his mother, that she had then married the Dr. Homburger he had learned to call father. Later he changed his own name, preserving the sign of his adoptive paternity only by a middle initial on the title pages of the books he would write. And yet, in the end, he became a member of a healing profession, and one who worked with children, moreover, as his pediatrician stepfather had done—but, still, chose not to reach this role by the conventional route through medicine, for he would remain without degrees and identified in the end with Dr. Freud who rebelled against the medical profession.

Erikson shows how his own psychosocial theories have been brought forth by our own period, with its craving for a mode by which the species may preserve itself, a futurity. In the end there are ethical questions. Do our times offer "too few final choices of an overdefined kind or too many ill-defined and exchangeable 'roles'"? What is "wrong" with the "normality" now achieved under the conditions of pseudo-speciation? Is there an undivided human identity that will at last—before it is too late—be possible for man to achieve? As always Erikson's speculations permit the further growth of answers urged by changing human life.

Millicent Bell

Millicent Bell is a biographer of note, most particularly of *Edith Wharton and Henry James* (Braziller).

Mute Witness

The Gun in America by Lee Kennett and James LaVerne Anderson

(Greenwood; $12.95)

The Gun: A "Biography" of the Gun That Killed John F. Kennedy by Henry S. Bloomgarde

(Grossman; $6.95)

Starting out with Captain John Smith subduing a giant Indian "king" with his "french pistoll," the American totem pole is a gun barrel engraved with familiar icons: Miles Standish and his blunderbuss, the Minuteman with Brown Bess, Dan'l Boone and his Kentucky rifle, John Brown and his Sharps "Beecher's Bible," Buffalo Bill and his Springfield "needle gun," the cowboy with his six-shooter and his lever-action Winchester. These are the most notable versions of a long metamorphosis, a national epic which is a tale of sidearms and the man, where equality is enforced from the barrel of a gun and where a "peacemaker" is a Colt not a cross.

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The imagery is so conventional that a picture in *The Gun in America* leaps out at us with idiosyncratic force, violating our sense of correctness, our violent decorums. An early advertisement for the Thompson submachine gun, it shows a cowboy in ten-gallon hat and furry chaps polishing off a gang of rustlers with singlehanded, rapidfire ease demonstrating that the weapon involved is "ideal for the protection of large estates, ranches, plantations, etc." and illustrating likewise the outrageous limits to which advertisers will go to promote a new product. That the cowboy's face resembles that of a recently disgraced President of the US known for his advocacy of law and order only italicizes the overreaching quality of the advertisement, its essential gaucherie in terms of our national imagery. It is of course J. Edgar Hoover and assorted gangsters that we associate with the Tommy Gun (and Bonnie Parker who along with Patty ["Tania"] Hearst have liberated the image of a man with a gun), not cowboys, yet it should be pointed out that the Thompson was sold as a "shoulder rifle in the form of the pistol," which could fire "from the hip 1,500 shots per minute." In effect the Tommy Gun was in terms of function and effect a latter-day improvement on Sam Colt's six-shot revolver, the ultimate weapon in settling the trans-Mississippi West and numerous lesser disputes. Mike Hammer is a stubby, snubnosed (and cheap) version of *La Longue Carabine*, Hawkeye himself, our archetype wildwood killer.

Such literary metamorphoses are not the concern of Professors Kennett and Anderson but do illustrate their thesis, which is that the gun is so pervasive a feature of our national development as to be virtually inextricable from our ideas of individualism and freedom. In sum, when the American goes out in pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness, he often packs a gun along. Starting out with the settlers of Jamestown and Plymouth Plantation—whose success was attributable in large part to the fact they had guns and the Indians did not—Kennett and Anderson provide a detailed brief history of our gunpower genesis, a cultural and technological chronicle which maintains a remarkably even temper in discussing a hotly controversial subject, bringing it down to the death of John F. Kennedy and the consequent passage of the Gun Control Act. Along the way they destroy a number of shibboleths, both liberal and conservative, and their most unsettling observation is that, though the Fourteenth Amendment was meant to provide for a militia not an *ad hoc* army of armed citizens, custom and use has in effect given Americans a traditional if not God-given right to keep, carry, and occasionally conceal deadly weapons. The question has become so tangled with faith, so emotionally charged, so intimate with our notions of manhood to say nothing of the rights of individuals and states, that whenever Congress heaves into reluctant slowmotion concerning the regulation of the sale and distribution of guns the ensuing dispute is bound to run itself out in profitless debate. Profitless, that is to say, for the advocates of gun control.

The excellent documentation of this book is a powerful mute witness to our noisy involvement with guns, not only the extensive footnotes but the annotated bibliography as well. It amounts to a virtual *vade mecum* and recommends itself to anyone interested in being well informed in the complex history of a complicated question, a "National Dilemma" second only in terms of agony and stalemate to Civil Rights. Though on the side of gun control, the authors are scrupulously fair to the National Rifle Association and to the small-arms industry, and they maintain throughout not only a readable style (the chapters by

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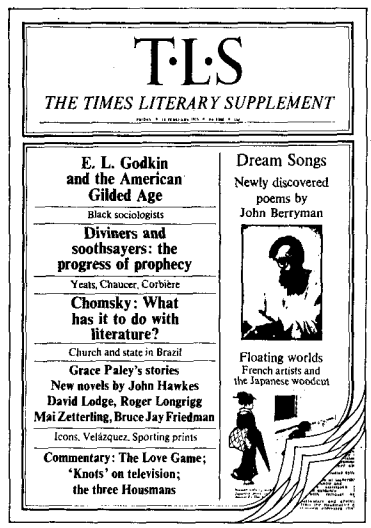
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Professor Kennett are particularly well-written) but also an attitude of detachment which actually enhances the remorselessness of their implicit argument, *viz.*, until the American character changes, the gun will remain among us, whether carried openly on a rack across the rear window of a pickup truck or hidden in a pocket or holster, "the distinctive heritage of a nation that began with a shot heard 'round the world." I recommend that a copy of *The Gun In America* be placed on the desk of every public official in the nation.

For if one side of our national totem pole is decorated with images of a famous man with a gun, the other side shows famous men being shot down, and if the gun-bearers are mythic heroes, plain people elevated by marksmanship, so the men being murdered are politicians, ordinary men elevated by the will of the people. Booth's shooting of Lincoln is symbolic, signalling a century of assassinations, the murder of the Kennedy brothers and Martin Luther King having a delayed echo in the abortive gunning-down of George Wallace. That Lincoln's death took place in a theater has a certain fitness and that Kennedy was shot in a Texas main street adds further meaning to the sequence, which took on an increasingly tawdry atmosphere, moving from a hotel kitchen to a motel to a supermarket parking lot, a declension marked likewise by the weapons involved, a random assortment of junk, a deadly trash in all ways a contrast to those symbolic guns borne by our mythic heroes.

Starting with the Kentucky rifle, the gun in the early years of the American republic is a thing of beauty, one of those technological artifacts whose function lends it a clean, neoclassical line. Kennett and Anderson tell us that rifling was introduced to America by German gunsmiths, along with the Jäger, "a massive ornamental rifle with a short barrel and large bore" which underwent strategic modifications to suit new-world needs, resulting in the balanced proportions and slim beauty of the gun which Boone made famous—or vice versa. But standardization of parts and mass-production changed all that, and the M-16 (a number not a name) is an ugly little machine in which utility transcends beauty. So also the weapons selected—picked up at a run as it were—by the assassins of modern times, the most important of which is the subject of a painstakingly researched and pointed tract by Henry S. Bloomgarden, *The Gun* being the one that killed John F. Kennedy.

It was a Mannlicher-Carcano Model 91, a number taken from the rifle's first year of production (1891), the year in which it was adopted "as Italy's official military shoulder weapon." Salvatore Carcano was the arms controller of the Turin arsenal who perfected a six-shot repeating rifle, adapting an invention of an Austrian, Ferdinand Ritter von Mannlicher, thereby contributing not only to the development of weaponry but to the emerging Italian national state. Like the bolt-action Springfield, the Mannlicher-Carcano was a durable gun, being the principle arm of the Italian soldier through two world wars. As a symbol of national might, it inspired a miniature "Italian youth carbine," complete with bayonet, which Mussolini ordered put into the hands of children during the '30s. These are now collectors' items, being relatively rare, but the ordinary Mannlicher-Carcano 91 was produced in such numbers as to amount to so much junk at war's end, part of "the debris and remnants of war" which is called "surplus" and which is sold to the highest bidder in bulk. So it came to pass that in 1959 an American firm offered the Italian government $1,776,000 for 570,000 Mannlicher-Carcano rifles, a firm called Adam Consolidated, once known as Adam Hat Stores. With changing fashions Adam Hat had fallen on hard times and turned to other lines of business. The hat may have ceased to be a masculine symbol in America, but the gun continued to be sure-fire merchandise even if occasionally faulty in operation.

Along with selling used cars and receiving stolen goods, the surplus arms business is a shadowy and ambiguous world, conducted under aliases and through agents and contingent on the kinds of agreements which pass for honor among thieves. Yet like more legitimate business, it does employ standard if minimal paperwork, which, like the identifying number and date of manufacture stamped on the gun that killed Kennedy, yields the requisite information. Made in 1940, the history of that particular Carcano during the war is conjectural, but once it was part of a sales transaction, once the paperwork began, a peculiar epic begins to emerge. The description of the forging of the hero's weapon is an epic convention, but what we have here is a mocking if not a mock version, a sordid story of violated agreements, customs impoundments, lawsuits and counter-suits, in short the rustling sound of paper similar to that made by mice and lawyers. Thus the most fascinating aspect of Bloomgarden's book should be the most boring, the relevant documents in the case, the contracts, invoices, customs declarations, order forms—in short the ephemera which is the soft core of modern life, the inner world of paper, the detritus of commercial exchange. With the Carcano rifle, these particular items of trash take on a singular meaning because of the tragedy to which they contributed: like bugs in amber, they are samples selected by fate for immortality.

Bloomgarden seals his documents in a suitably clear, plastic style allowing ironies to assert themselves. But in other sections of his book he is less detached, most notably in his discussion of the second-hand arms industry, the issue of gun control and the ubiquitous activities of the National Rifle Association described as "a somewhat pathetic and questionable anachronism, founded before the frontier had disappeared and unwilling to change." Still, despite the difference in tone, Bloomgarden's book can be read as an expanded appendix to *The Gun in America*, in which overview and detachment give way to particular details and anger. For the man with a gun who emerges at the last is a sad and frightening figure, one more ordinary citizen elevated by violence, but in this case a psychotic who obtained a deadly weapon with the ease which only the American businessman and the US mails can provide. Whether Oswald did or did not actually kill President Kennedy is an academic question at least so far as *The Gun* is concerned. Because he and his Mannlicher-Carcano are good enough examples for Bloomgarden's purposes, being symbols of the tragic dimension of our national dilemma, social flotsam armed with industrial jetsam drifting toward a sudden and violent conclusion.

John Seelye

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Peter Meinke on poetry

I don't know if style in poetry reflects style in living—the formalism of the academic poet/critics of the '40s and '50s and '60s. But these four books, the best of a recent batch sent to me, have in common a modest colloquialism, controlled informality, and an insistence on thinking small that seems to me to match a dominant tone of the '70s:

Hazard, The Painter
by William Meredith
(Knopf; $4.95)

Virtuoso Literature for Two and Four Hands
by Diane Wakoski
(Doubleday; $4.95)

The Breathers
by James Reiss
(Ecco Press; $6.95)

Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror
by John Ashbery
(Viking; $6.95)

tough times, confusing times, we hang in there, doing our best to keep it together without making a big fuss.

Moving gracefully with the years, William Meredith's poetry has modified its former formal elegance to a point where it can absorb casual conversation; observations of nature, human and otherwise; and meditations on art and society:

The grown ones have wine after the other bottle. They cast out a lot. "The dancers this afternoon were, well thinky,"
she says. She toys with her glass.

"He is strictly a one-joke painter,"
he replies, "painted that one twenty years ago and is still putting pepper on it, ha hah. Finish your turkey, you two and leave a little gravy for someone else."

Hazard, The Painter moves gradually from this almost bathetic tone in the first poem to a tighter, still understated voice reminiscent of Philip Larkin's, though more optimistic, in the final poem:

Gnawed by a vision of rightness
that no one else seems to see,
what can a man do
but bear witness?

And what has he got to tell?
Only the shaped things he's seen -
a few things made by men,
a galaxy made well.

Though more of each day is dark,
though he's awkward at the job,
he squeezes paint from a tube.
Hazard is back at work.

Hazard is an intelligent, even charming book, full of liberal sense and sensibility. *TNR* readers should be particularly attracted to sections called "The Life of the Artist in Capitalist Society (c. 1927)," "Politics," "Nixon's the One," etc. A gentle wit and a sharp eye give this small (48 pages, 16 poems) volume a likeable personality, whether it be Hazard's or Meredith's.

Diane Wakoski's **Virtuoso Literature for Two and Four Hands** is also low key, clearer and more prosy than her previous books. The tone is set by "The Emerald Essay," a prose-poem lecture in letter form on the nature of poetry that first appeared as one of her columns in *The American Poetry Review*. Compared to *Hazard*, *Virtuoso* is much more abstract, with a tendency toward wise sayings:

There are many ways to die,
but none of them is subtle.

or

Nothing is simple or innocent any more, except poetry and music.

or

none of us understands
each other's life.

or

Our lives are *our own.*
We must assert it.
We must ask grace from ourselves.

The best poems here, like "Second Chance," "The Inevitable Garden," "Cobra Lilies in the Supermarket," progress by leap-frogging from thought to memory on the backs of similar

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phrases and images: moon to silver dimes in shoes to getting an electrical shock while barefoot to other's indifference or ignorance of this experience to everyone's isolation and suffering, and back to dimes, moon, shoes, and "invisible current" at the end. Wakoski uses more similes here than I remember in her earlier work, often with great skill and imagination:

and I heard the audience coughing,
flashing every once in a while
like light catching a strip of aluminum
which blows on a fruit tree. . . .

They too have a piano in their living room,
gleaming in the dark, like brandied cherries
in a flat french bottle. . . .

On the wall, the sun projects the patterns
of a venetian blind,
looking like a paper skeleton from the dime store that
attached paper bones with fan-folded crepe paper. . . .

She writes in "Offering to Trade Lives with the Clam," "This is not a poem: it is a statement about life. I write it with the wrists of winter, with ice in my fingers, with the frost of my passionate lips." Her statements about life are not remarkable, but many of these poems and parts of poems are, especially when she sticks to the visual and informative (some fine writing, particularly, about mushrooms, which appear in several of these poems as a symbol for the good life).

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James Reiss' first book of poems, **The Breathers**, is, among other things, a paean of praise for his family: wife, children, mother and especially his father:

When I was a boy the sun was a horse.
When I was a boy I sang "Rum and Coca-Cola."
When I was a boy my father told me the mountains
were the earth's sombreros.

Like *Hazard* and *Virtuoso*, the language here is simple, the dominant tone nostalgic but positive, what sociologists would call "value-oriented." The most interesting aspect of *The Breathers*, however, works against this tone; there is a pull toward nightmare, like a mysterious and frightening shadow that shows up in a collection of old photographs: a Kafkaesque quality, clear but distorted, difficult to show in short excerpts:

Across the yard, like a moth,
a girl in a 1920's dress who has been crouching
behind trash cans flings open the gate
and flaps down the street, trailing a banner
of white surgical gauze

or

The other day as I paused to urinate
I was surprised to see a ripple, then bubbles
boiling in the toilet bowl.
Silverfish, I thought, and was about to proceed
when a grotesque head surfaced like a drowned man.

"Remember the babies," it slurred, dark
lion's hair matted down over its face,
muffling its words. . . .

Other poems, like "Crystal," are better examples of what I mean but are too long to quote. All in all, this is an impressive first book, solid rather than flashy; although these poems do not make grand pronouncements they have as their source what Howard Nemerov called "great primary human drama," and they are always interesting and often moving.

John Ashbery's poems are not exactly removed from that drama, but his point of view is so internal the connections are difficult to grasp. He begins:

I tried each thing, only some were immortal and free.
Elsewhere we are as sitting in a place where sunlight
Filters down, a little at a time,
Waiting for someone to come. Harsh words are spoken,
As the sun yellows the green of the maple tree. . . .

One senses the meditative stance of Wallace Stevens behind Ashbery's lines, without Stevens' sense of linguistic play. **Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror** is a very literary, cultured, self-conscious book (as the title implies). The long and fascinating title poem, a sort of *ars poetica*, leads one to think of Ashbery as a Mannerist poet:

As Parmigianino did it, the right hand
Bigger than the head, thrust at the viewer
And swerving easily away, as though to protect
What it advertises. . . .

Ashbery's relaxed and flexible lines easily incorporate long quotes from Vasari, Freedberg and other art historians, but his lines generally have the *feel* of blank verse moving across the page in a stately manner:

We have seen the city; it is the gibbous
Mirrored eye of an insect. All things happen
On its balcony and are resumed within,
But the action is the old, syrupy flow
Of a pageant. One feels too confined,
Sifting the April sunlight for clues,
In the mere stillness of the ease of its
Parameter. The hand holds no chalk
And each part of the whole falls off
And cannot know it knew, except
Here and there, in cold pockets
Of remembrance, whispers out of time.

Self-Portrait is easily the most mysterious and suggestive of these four books—one is tempted to say Ashbery has the most interesting mind. These poems are mainly, I suppose, about himself. He writes in "The One Thing That Can Save America": "I know that I braid too much my own / Snapped-off perceptions of things as they come to me. / They are private and always will be." Though I think many of these poems remain too private, this book should be read, and will intrigue, delight and puzzle its many readers.

Peter Meinke teaches at Eckerd College St. Petersburg, Florida.

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Covering Cannes

by Edward Zwick

Cannes—the name just drips with glamour, especially during those two weeks in May that mark the annual film festival. By day, one imagines bikini-clad starlets on sun-buttered beaches; by night, bacchanalian revelries on producers' private yachts. Not at Cannes, at least not anymore. The major studios of today no longer keep bevies of young lovelies under contract to be flown in, dressed up by the wardrobe department, and paraded up and down the Croisette, a Mediterranean version of the Atlantic City boardwalk. Instead the palm-lined avenue swarms with 20,000 of what seem to be the same pre-faded, rhinestone-studded, denim jean-and-jacket combination, and 2000 international journalists all thirsty for an easy story and a free drink. Even the three-star Carlton, renowned as one of the last of the luxurious old world hostelries, emanates about the same degree of elegance and flash as a convention of plumbers.

Many here, particularly the old-timers, lament the passing of such a dazzling era, invoking the spirit of showmen like Raoul Levy who once transformed the Carlton into a 1920s Paris nightclub—complete with gaslights, red velvet walls and 100 tables, each with two dozen red roses, as well as a full orchestra to accompany cancan girls from the Moulin Rouge, or David O. Selznick who would traditionally hire a chauffeur-driven, gold-plated Rolls Royce to cover the 200 yards from his hotel lobby to the Festival Palace. The complaint most often articulated is that the festival has become so "commercial," which is to say, so "crass." As Charles Champlin, entertainment editor of the *LA Times* and a regular at Cannes puts it: "I sometimes get the impression that the Mediterranean is filled with cigar smoke." But it is false to assume that this represents any significant change; in fact, the only (real) difference between festivals then and now is a cosmetic one. Like so many other facets of the motion picture industry, its facade has simply become too costly to maintain. The guiding principle of Cannes is as it always has been: people congregate here just as they do for an electronics fair, a livestock show, or any other professional trade convention: to do business, in dollars, yen, pounds and francs.

The scale of business ranges from international production negotiations for "A" pictures to local distribution deals for soft-core porn. But everybody, whether studio head, producer, agent, star, distributor or exhibitor, has a product—and a potential world market concentrated within a three block radius. Everyone knows where everyone else can be found. They all have taken ads saying where in the three trade papers appearing daily. The ambiance is that of the marketplace, and in its shadow the competition for prizes is little more than pleasant window-dressing. Indeed many American films have been known to shy away from competition either for fear of winning and thus acquiring an "arty" image, or else for fear of losing and thus giving a box office black-eye to their product before it even opens.

What "happens" at Cannes happens not in the *grande salle* of the Palace where the official entries are shown and judged, but rather over drinks on the Carlton terrace, in the Blue Bar, on the beach or in one of the city's 11 commercial movie houses that has been commandeered 'round the clock for invitation-only viewing. Many distributors even go so far as to create private projection rooms in their hotel suites in order to accommodate the frantic schedules of prospective buyers. The decibel level is equally high, with the few snatches of conversation intelligible through the general din resembling the soundtrack for a Hollywood version of an Arab *souk*. The tone is the shrill, high-pitched edge of barter, "MONEY, Charlie, big big MONEY!", the modulation of the telephone screamers, "Listen Arty, I'm doing ya a favor. I'm giving ya a piece of Australia . . . FOR NOTHIN'!"

A general rule of thumb seems to hold that the smaller, or more insecure the deal, the noisier the fanfare that accompanies it. Thus the exhibition floors of the Festival Palace, crowded with the carnival-like booths of the B-pictures and the porno-kings, are feverishly active. This is the world of the "freebie," the give-away pennant, poster, lollipop and tee-shirt; of titles like *The Schoolgirl Suckers, The Parasite Murders, Spank me, Henry,* and *Spermula* (". . . *some lady vampires drink more than blood*"). It is also the domain not of the Zanucks and Valentis, but of names like Harvey Pergament and Ivan Winkleman, and thousands of others like them—one or two steps out of the limelight, sweating just a little bit harder to make a buck.

Which is not to suggest that the industry giants do not sweat; it's just that they do so much less obviously. One afternoon in the cool lobby of the Hotel Majestic, Paul Kohner (perhaps the most powerful agent in the world—his list of clients includes Ingmar Bergman, Charles Bronson, Liv Ullmann, Maria Schneider) sits down with his friend Dino De Laurentiis (the Italian mogul recently moved to Hollywood) and shakes hands after a pleasant 10-minute chat, with the end result coming to about a million dollars a minute. Of course such whirlwind wheeling and dealing is more typical of the old school tycoons—of which Kohner, a long-time friend of Von Stroheim and Goldwyn, is one of the very last—than of the studio executives of today. They are, for the most part, a new breed, cautious men schooled in economics who speak the M.B.A. language of corporate decisions, problem-solving and tax shelters. Many shun the frenzy of the Croisette altogether, preferring to remain ensconced in such out-of-town hotels as the super-elegant Cap d'Antibes or the Colombe d'Or, considered by some as the most beautiful *auberge* in the world. A significant majority of these bigshots do not attend a single festival screening with the obvious exception of their own premier. Those who seek an audience must first make appointments with protection secretaries.

There is one group whose requests for appointments are almost uniformly respected: the press. In a reversal of the familiar story-ferreting, adversary situation, the press is catered to at every turn; plied with attractive press kits, seduced by juicy releases with already written stories, conveniently scheduled press conferences and exclusive interviews. Ever-thirsty journalists are also feted by at least one cocktail reception daily, because nowhere in the world can this kind of coverage be had at one place, at one time, at such a minor expense of money and effort. In five days at Cannes Richard Zanuck and David Brown, in town to promote their forthcoming *Jaws*, met with over 100 reporters from all over the world, confident of receiving

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The Vietnam Summing Up

The New Republic of May 3, 1975, with its starkly evocative cover of Goya on "the disasters of war," brought together the reflections of the wisest critics of the Vietnam adventure.

Harold R. Isaacs, Kevin Buckley, Frances FitzGerald, Stanley Karnow, Richard Holbrooke, Chester L. Cooper, George McT. Kahin, Adam Yarmolinsky, Stanley Hoffmann, Anthony Lewis, Hans Morgenthau, Ronald Steel, James Chace, Dong Duc Khoi, and **Gerald Hickey.**

These final essays are in themselves significant postscripts to history. If you would like copies of this special May 3 issue for yourself or a friend, for a child, or a student, please send in the coupon below. You will value this issue as long as we have reason to remember the past.

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more play at their table on the Carlton terrace than in their subsequent tour of 24 American and European cities. Several producers, such as Michael Klinger, even arranged exotic junkets—flying a Lear jetload of reporters down to Malta just to watch a day's shooting on the set of his current film, and back again in time for the evening festivities.

And such treatment pays handsome dividends. Millions, literally millions, of words are written about how hard Valerie Perrine found the role of Honey Bruce in *Lenny*, about Jack Nicholson's respect for Michelangelo Antonioni and vice versa, about . . . about practically nothing. Or rather, about practically anything as long as they spell the names right.

One name in particular seemed guaranteed not to be mispelled this year, if for no reason other than its ubiquitousness. It was skywritten, hung from a blimp, trailed behind a small plane, and spelled out on the sails of a dozen small boats anchored in Cannes harbor. MARIO PUZO, with the assistance of Alexandre Salkind, was selling a feature film called *Superman*. By virtue of his name, his two academy awards and the box office receipts of *The Godfather* I and II, Puzo was extracting commitments for production money, upfront, in exchange for exclusive territorial rights to a movie that existed only in the smoke with which its title was written across the sky. And he got it too.

This is Cannes at its most audacious. The festival of the scramblers, the hustlers, the dreamsellers. Only here could Dino De Laurentiis make an annual triumphant entrance, announcing a dozen or more projects for the coming year, each of which will not have had a single frame of celluloid shot—and then with the advances harvested from starry-eyed distributors, go out and shoot the pictures.

The key word is "project"; everybody has one in mind. From the Italian producer, stranded $200,000 short in the middle of shooting, who jets in from location in Ferrara to sell a piece of his film in return for the hard cash that will enable him to finish it, to the waiter at the Festival Café, or the anonymous hotel employee who stuffed his script into the shoes a top studio executive had left out to be shined the night before. At least one out of every four pictures announced during the festival will never be made. The "project" will have fallen apart; the "package," so tenuously put together—*such and such* an actor will agree to do *such* a film only if *such* a

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director will agree . . . and so on—will have come unstuck.

These failures, however, do not discourage the hardened Cannes scrambler. Rather, a busted project is to be regarded as an object lesson from which one learns to push even harder next year. To this end he desperately plays the *contact game*, accumulating chits in what has always been a kind of second currency within the industry. With a combination of effrontery and obsequiousness that would make Sammy Glick blush, he cultivates any possible avenue of "access"—hugging and kissing total strangers, toadying to keep within the immediate proximity of the big wheels. The major league stadium for this sycophantic game is the Carlton terrace, and the importance of the players can be measured by whether they are walking around looking for people to greet, or sitting at tables waiting to be greeted.

But the Carlton terrace is by no means the only game in town, nor are the hustling producers the only players. All along the Croisette (which translates literally as "meeting street"), the smaller scale fakers promenade: one, a representative for a nonexistent LA film distributor, another "doing something" for Canadian TV, a third with false press credentials and a vague story about an article "on spec" for a major magazine. They spend their time in the smaller cafés, discussing the work of famous directors in single sentences, using words like "derivative" and "seminal," dismissing one film as "thin," heralding another as "textured," trying very hard not to pick up a check.

Also on the fringes are the host of hopefuls. On the not unjustified assumption that, in the limited world of film, all roads lead to Cannes, thousands descend in search of the mysteriously elusive key to the movie biz. Most often they find one another: the beginning director protectively clutching the metal canister of his first 16mm short, the out of work bit player, and the recent graduate from an ivy league college who has always *"loved movies and would like to make it his life's work but just doesn't know how to start."* Many go away frustrated. But for those who will some day make a career in film, this slice of industry life flourishes a healthy cynicism about the state of the art.

Completing the cast of characters are the inevitable stereotypes, the anticipated yet nonetheless astonishing grotesques: the fading starlet, whose film has been rejected from competition, come to sulk in public, plants her beach umbrella next to the balding, paunchy producer with a sunlamp tan, pale toothpick legs, and a statuesque blonde on each arm. Before them, along the water's edge, parade the unknown *aspirés*, working girls from Paris boutiques, sometime models, and local bathing beauties, all seeking the Cannes equivalent to a stool at Schwab's drugstore. Otherwise attractive women, they imitate the obscenity and sadness of those who are doomed to live their lives in public. Off the beach, on the quiet sidestreets, is another kind of parade: trainloads of elegant hookers down from Paris do a vigorous business.

A bit deeper into downtown Cannes, in the uncomfortable local theaters, sit the serious critics: the dedicated students of world film who have come to watch movies, period. For them Cannes is a cinema-junkie's paradise—over 500 films projected 'round the clock with often as many as 40 different screenings showing simultaneously. Movies of every sort, from bestiality to children's films, Hollywood to the Third World, and all (with the proper credentials) free of charge. As a species, these zealots are often difficult to spot, preferring to hibernate both day and night in dark, musty rooms, staring at a flickering white screen. The most advantageous time for sighting them is early in the morning, before the first 8:45 projection. Then they can be found, huddled together, nibbling on croissants in front of the entrance—bleary-eyed with ashen complexions, but happy, grinning like little children set free in a candy store as they "x" off their program for the next 18 hours. The endurance record indisputably belongs to a professor of film on sabbatical from a Midwestern university who (allegedly) saw six films a day, taking only two 15-minute breaks for baguette and beer.

For him and those like him—professional cameramen, lighting directors, editors and directors—interested in film as art, there were many provocative things to see: Ingmar Bergman's film adaptation of Mozart's *Magic Flute;* Andrzej Wajda's (*Ashes and Diamonds*) new film *Promised Land;* the Czechoslovakian Jan Němec's first movie made in the West since his exile (shot and cut in less than six weeks) *Le Decollété dans le Dos;* and Théodore Angelopoulos' lesson in modern Greek History, *The Voyage of the Comedians.* There were conventional offerings by controversial directors—Michelangelo Antonioni, Marguerite Duras (*Hiroshima Mon Amour*) and Miklos Jancsó—and underwhelming films by Schlesinger, Losey, Russell, Costa-Gavras and Scorsese. There were also such delightful sleepers as Joan Silver's bittersweet evocation of immigrant life in turn of the century New York in Hester Street (even more successful as a result of its shoestring budgetry), and Michel Brault's ominous fictional/*cinema verité* re-creation of the repression of civil liberties in 1970 Quebec, *Les Ordres.* The single element shared by all of this year's entries was length—the average languishing somewhere near two-and-a-half-hours.

The prize winners were only slightly more unpredictable than in years past. The unwritten rule under which at least one American film is guaranteed a prize was followed as Valerie Perrine won for best actress, while the male interpretation award went to Vittorio Gassman for a joyous performance as a blind man in Dino Risi's *Woman's Perfume.* Costa-Gavras was the equally obligatory French award winner with *Special Section,* sharing the director's prize with *The Enigma of Kasper Hauser* by Werner Herzog. And a melodramatic Algerian film, *Chronicle of the Years of Cinders,* was given the Palm d'Or in what suspiciously smacked of an official cultural stamp of approval for Giscard d'Estaing's new rapprochement with Algeria.

Considering its size, the festival ran with remarkable efficiency, and promises to be even bigger next year. Its importance grows steadily as Venice and Berlin fade into glorified award-giving ceremonies, and businessmen realize that almost 50 percent of all box office receipts today come from Europe. Everyone left the Cote d'Azur with a mild suntan and the much brighter afterglow of business well done: although no two estimates are the same, the total amount of business easily exceeded $200 million. According to Paul Kohner, "Business has never been better . . . Good films are doing good business. Big films are doing big business." This is perfectly understandable coming from a man whose client, Charles Bronson, opens simultaneously in 1500 theaters and expects to gross $20 million to $30 million in the first three weeks. Only one film out of 10, however, makes money. Yes, goes the refrain, but one big film makes up for nine flops. After all, *The Godfather* grossed $300 million.

Edward Zwick will be a fellow in directing at AFI in Los Angeles in September.

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Recent Fiction

Still Life
by Sanford Friedman

(Saturday Review Press/Dutton; $8.95)

Sanford Friedman's earlier novels, *Totem Pole* and *A Haunted Woman*, explored the realms of private mythology and public art in very different but equally compelling ways. A passionately painstaking and elegant writer in all the years I have known him and his work, his books are unhurried in following each other. Despite its subtitle, *Still Life* is a subtly but powerfully unified work, consisting of a novella of horrifying family life that edges into the world of visionary romance, and a retelling of a Greek myth that moves at its close into a mode of naturalization far from its Olympian beginnings. Two protagonists, designated for different narrative reasons by the neuter pronoun "It," emerge in these tales from confrontations with supernatural committees: in one instance into death, in the other into a new kind of life. In the first instance the committee is part of a brilliantly conceived and frightening delusional system; in the second, it is composed of the Olympian gods in conclave. The effect of the book's unity is to make us see this fierce assembly, making a ghastly decision, as at once more benign and more unimpeachable in its power than the psychotic fictions who, in the first tale, do their dreamer to death.

This group is an imaginary Committee of Public Safety, wearing the symbolic trappings of Jacobin horror but composed of ahistorical beings, that flourishes in the delusions of Danny Wahl, the insane son of a French-Jewish art-dealing family in New York. For the single evening's space of this story (its title, *Still Life* means both the "*nature morte*" of paintings remarkably worked into the story, and "life nevertheless") he is at home on a trial visit from his mental hospital. The reader is plunged into Danny's dreadful family—emotionally suffocating mother, morally absented father, bickering brothers all enmired in jealousy and resentment—from the outset; the very opening sentence introduces us *chez* Wahl by focusing on a servant—like the opening of "The Dead"—and as the maddening pressure of ordinarily dreadful people increases upon the reader and upon the initially calm and rational-seeming Danny, he retreats into a room filled with his private demons. Frightening as they are (and the terror of this inner mythology is as piercing as the representations of delusion in Sartre's "The Room"), they seem at first a stabilizing element: one can feel a victimized son's need for a Robespierre to counterterrorize the Wahl family regime. But they emerge—particularly one Lashmit, as nasty and chilling a presence as one might encounter—as a final tribunal in which the violent faction of insane justice wins out over the milder party of mercy. In a passage of triumphantly affective stichomythia (actually ending in logomythia, or word against word), the story concludes with a final line whose concentrated irony reaffirms the closure of death as the prototype, alas, of all escapes, as Danny leaps out of his mother's realm into the bosom, after all, of earth.

Danny's committee refers to him as "It," not to desexualize him (for love and art are the two realms of potential human salvation that the Wahls have made impossible for their son), but to make of him their Thing, even as human reason maddeningly makes things into abstractions. The protagonist of the second tale, "Life Blood," is also referred to throughout as "It." But Agdistis, a hermaphrodite half-brother of Dionysus, is castrated by the order of a jealous Olympian council that turns out to be nonetheless powerless to prevent It's fathering the beautiful youth Attis, who becomes Agdistis' lover and, eventually, self-mutilating sacificial victim.

Friedman has taken the Phrygian myth of Attis (a local version of the Syrian Adonis), who castrated himself in a grove sacred to the mother-goddess Cybele, and expanded it in something of the manner of a Renaissance mythological work. From a footnote in Fraser's *The Golden Bough* (mentioning "a savage story that the mother of Attis conceived by putting in her bosom a pomegranate sprung from the severed genitals of a man-monster named Agdestis), a tradition that Agdistis was another name for Cybele (and perhaps Catullus' strange poem on the castrated Attis that switches the gender of pronouns denoting its protagonist to the feminine between the fifth and sixth lines), he has invented a central figure who combines creative and destructive phases of divinity, and who yet fathers, loves and suffers like a human. The rich calm of the narrative mode contrasts strongly with the earlier representation of Danny's modes of self-mutilation and destructon (tearing away at his fingernails for example). "Life Blood" has more the tone of Mann's historical tales than of expressionistic or French neoclassical mythography. Even the violent destructions of King Midas' Phrygia, which occur at the end, and the revisonary account of Attis' death are narrated from a magisterial distance. And yet it is a tone that only the prologue of the previous story can prepare the reader to understand.

It is not merely that the two councils, placed back-to-back at the end of the first tale and the start of the second, make for a structural symmetry. The pairing of internal and external realms, pictures and delusions on the one hand, and mythological forms on the other, reveals two halves of a vision whose totality is the imagination itself. In the stories believers destroy themselves, and their gods and delusions are both reductions of the imaginative totality. But in the second story life and vision ultimately triumph as frenzy is outlasted, even as the naturalistic horrors of the first tale fade into the memory of nightmare.

John Hollander

John Hollander's most recent book of poetry is *Tales Told of the Fathers* (Atheneum).

Riding into Battle, My Heart on Your Lance

You're my peach
You're my prince
Pennoned
Gonfaloned
Tietacked
You joust
Mosey along
Astride your
Falcon steed

You're my bee
You're my berry
My cufflinked
Charlemagne
Of traffic jams
And medieval nights
The modern day
Vassal of
Medici me

Nan Socolow

Nan Socolow is a poet living in Washington, DC.

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ברירה (BREIRA)

MEANS ALTERNATIVE

We mean to express an alternative voice within the American Jewish Community. In doing so, we also hope to build creative links between independent-minded Diaspora and Israeli Jews based on shared values and traditions, as well as a shared responsibility and commitment to solving the problems which confront the Jewish people as a whole.

We believe that response to ongoing crises in Israel cannot continue to serve as the central psychological, religious, cultural, political, and institutional basis of Jewish involvement; such a relationship ultimately undermines healthy and creative Jewish development in both Israel and the Diaspora. We dedicate ourselves to building an independent American Jewish community, capable of revitalizing Diaspora Jewish life, of addressing the serious problems which confront us in American society and of maintaining a mutually productive relationship with the State of Israel.

We are nonetheless concerned that the future of the Arab-Israeli conflict seems as uncertain as ever. Moreover, we believe that some important policies of the Israeli government, developed under intense pressure of foreign hostility and domestic distress, have been unwise and ineffective. Feeling as we do that all Jews are responsible to and for one another, we would be ashamed to ignore or swallow our concern. While we understand the motives that impel some Jews to remain silent about their disagreements with official Israeli policy, we believe that such silence is ultimately irresponsible.

Certainly the suspension of talks between Egypt and Israel, conducted through the mediation of Dr. Kissinger in March, has been a setback to the cause of peace in the Middle East. We believe that the current situation, however, can be materially altered if all parties to the conflict take the obvious and necessary steps toward reconciliation. Resumption of Egyptian-Israeli talks, from the point at which they broke off, is of utmost importance for future progress toward peace. In particular, their successful conclusion can set the stage for positive and fruitful results when the Geneva Conference reconvenes.

But in any case, the renewal of the Geneva Conference is a likelihood in the near future, and Israel should submit to it a peace plan of its own. Israel, because of her strength and central position in the conflict, can afford to take the initiative and make her position and desire for peace absolutely clear. Failing this, Israel may once again be driven to the passive role of reacting to plans submitted by others and subjected to pressures on all sides to accept other parties' formulations, in addition to facing an increasingly dangerous international isolation.

We express our support for the following principles as the basis for Israel's peace plan. These principles have been put forward by a small but influential group of Israeli political and cultural personalities, journalists, academics and kibbutz members who call themselves 'Yozma' (Initiative) and who feel that Israel's best interests are served by efforts designed to build peace in the Middle East.

1. Israel should declare that she has no expansionist ambitions whatsoever, and is prepared to give up the territories occupied in the 1967 War in return for:
a) recognition by the Arabs of the soveriegnty and integrity of the State of Israel.
b) a mutual undertaking by Arabs and Israelis to maintain peaceful relations and to refrain from acts of hostility of all kinds.
2. Israel should express its willingness within this context to start immediate negotiations toward a peace treaty, wherein shall be determined all procedures and guarantees necessary to insure peace and security for all parties, including the final demarcation of borders, establishment of demilitarized zones, supervision and inspection, as well as the stages in which progress toward a full peace relationship will be made. The establishment of such a relationship must be the final goal of the negotiatons.
3. Israel should have no objection to the establishment within the territories she shall evacuate on the West Bank and in Gaza, of an independent Palestinian state provided such a state undertake to recognize the sovereignty and integrity of the State of Israel, maintain peaceful relations with her, and refrain from acts of hostility, including acts of terror against Israel and her citizens. Israel should be prepared to negotiate these matters with any Palestinian leadership which is prepared to accept these conditions.
4. Jerusalem, the capital of the state of Israel, should remain a unified city. Proper steps will have to be taken to guarantee the privileges of the three faiths for whom it is sacred. In addition, special arrangements, necessitated by the fact that Jerusalem will be inhabited by citizens of two states, will have to be made.

Among the members of Yozma are: Dr. Mattityahu Peled, Head of the Arabic Department of Tel Aviv Univeristy and formerly a Major General and Chief of Logistics in the Israeli Defense Forces; Ya'akov Arnon, former Director General of the Israeli Finance Ministry; Simcha Flapan, Editor of *New Outlook* magazine; David Shacham, member of the Central Committee of the Israeli Labor Party; Eli Bengal, member of the Central Committee of Mapam; Yishayahu Weinberg, Director of the Israel Chamber Theater; Prof. Yehoshua Arieli, Hebrew University; Dr. Meir Pail, member of Knesset, Moked; Dr. Yoram Rosenberg, Tel Aviv University; Boaz Evron, commentator, *Yediot Ahronot*

A peace plan, based on these principles, will ensure the existence and well-being of the State of Israel and the existence and well-being of her neighbors. It has a fair chance of being acceptable to the Arab governments directly concerned. But in case it fails to gain acceptance, it will nevertheless serve as proof of Israel's sincere desire for peace. Such a demonstration is necessary to gain Israel the understanding and sympathy of peoples who may now be entertaining doubts as to her intentions.

Together with concerned Israelis, we therefore call upon the government of the State of Israel to adopt without delay the principles formulated above and make its peace plan known before the Geneva Converence reconvenes.

This statement has been endorsed by the following individuals:

Florence Adler
Jerome Adler
Robert Alpern
Edya Arzt
Daniel Asia
Rabbi Albert Axelrad
Bruce Ballin
Prof. David Ball
Peter Bartfeld
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ABA—1975

Doris Grumbach

The American Booksellers Association meeting this year (its 75th) was the customary circus-cum-convention antics, with the added interest of much serious book-selling talk and even more serious cash business. Twelve thousand booksellers, exhibitors from 450 publishers, librarians, authors, critics and publishers' representatives crowded the halls of the NY Hilton and Americana, looking at and exhibiting what might sell, or was guaranteed to sell, among the late summer and fall trade books. It took endurance to visit all the nearly 600 booths—80 more than last year's Washington, DC convention, a sign of the continuing health of the book business.

While the serious business went on, the antics made the news:

The first day's autographing and interviewing was with one of the world's bestselling novelists. Mailer? No. Michener? No. Actually it was Louis L'Amour who writes Westerns. His latest is *Sackett's Land* (Sat. Rev. Press/Bantam). More than 40 million copies of his books have been sold.

The second day featured Muhammed Ali, and his *The Greatest: My Story* (Random House). He told the press he'd been writing his book (with Richard Durham) for six years, looked fine, handsome and unmarked by both his recent ring experience and his long literary travail. His appearance at Random House's booth drew the largest crowds of any during the four days. There were no books for him to sign, but he shook hands; his admirers had to content themselves with munching the popcorn provided free from Time/Life Books' booth where *Life Goes to the Movies* was being touted.

Rose Namath Szolnoki appeared before the press to push *Namath; My Son Joe* (Oxmoor). "He is a very good, very obedient boy," she told us. That evening in New York on the TV news, in the coverage I saw, Rose and Ali were the only figures from the ABA mentioned.

Next day there was Fanne Foxe and a grey, mangy looking wolf. Fanne came to plug *Fanne Foxe: The Story Behind the Headlines* (Pinnacle) and told reporters (of Wilbur Mills): "I love him very much. We talk by phone two or three times a week." Sharing the podium with her that day was Rocky the wolf whom author of *Man Kind?* (Dell), Cleveland Amory, brought along to illustrate the point of his soon-to-be-reissued volume, "a strong, anti-hunt book, a strong leave-animals-alone book."

A man-sized angel walked about in front of the Paulist Press booth, complete with halo, feathered wings and white robe, advertising a book called *Butterfingers Angel*. If the point were not made graphically enough by his celestial presence there were little Butterfinger candy bars available for the taking.

A poor author named Mike McGrady paraded in a sandwich board advertising his own forthcoming *Kitchen-Sink Papers: My Life as a Househusband*. The stunt, he said, was Doubleday's idea. He told reporters he felt "ridiculous and absurd."

Logos Books has an impressive glass case displaying what it claimed to be a piece of Noah's Ark, taken from Mt. Ararat and useful for advertising F. Navarra's book, *Noah's Ark: I Touched it.*

Other displays were more in tone with the bookish nature of the proceedings. Bobbs-Merrill gave away a collection of notepaper to celebrate the 40th anniversary of its *Joy of Cooking*, a household classic that has now undergone its first revision in 12 years. Many exhibitors handed out imprinted plastic bags, useful for carrying the buttons, posters and gadgets of other exhibitors. (I saw what I assume was a bookseller sitting with a lady; between them they had seven shopping bags filled with free books, posters, giveaways).

Some exhibitors were primly discreet. *The New York Review of Books* gave away copies of itself and two fine postcards of David Levine drawings of Colette and Stravinsky. *The New Yorker* booth had facsimile copies of its February 21, 1925 issue to mark its 50th anniversary. I noted with interest that it sold for 15 cents a copy back then, five dollars a year, and each of its features was marked by extreme brevity. A profile of Giulio Gatti-Casazza was one-and-one-third pages long; theater took up three paragraphs, one each for three plays; the music review, signed *Con Brio*, was five short paragraphs. Aldous Huxley's *Those Barren Leaves* was reviewed in 200 words; the other books of the day, including ones by Rose Macauley and Jim Corbett, in one paragraph each. Other books were merely listed with a sentence. Mark Twain's *Autobiography* (Harpers) was disposed of in 10 words, among them "Much junk, with much pure gold."

Somewhere I was handed a facsimile piece of old Texas money, a copy of the *Boston Globe* advertising its coming book festival, and a wooden toy airplane with *The American Heritage Dictionary* stamped in its wings. The Chilton Book Company of Radnor, Pennsylvania pressed upon me some samples of can poptops that may be strung together to make chain-mail-looking dresses, to call attention to its book called *Pop-Topping* by an author named Pop Top Terp.

Over and beyond all this hurly-burly, the taking of advance orders was brisk. Word was that the book business, despite the economy, is not suffering—in fact is up a bit this year from last. Publishers made the usual special offers—one book free for every 10 bought, and especially high discounts for early convention orders—to the booksellers; the stalls of all the major publishers were crowded with lookers and takers. One interesting departure was the booth of the Workman Publishing Company where, every time I went by, a book of cartoons called *Cat* by B Kliban was selling briskly. And Lyle Stuart seemed to be doing well with orders on *Sex and All You Can Eat*, or perhaps it was the lollipops being given out with that title embossed on them that attracted interest.

Meetings on the serious business of bookselling for members of the profession, not the rest of us, occupied the time of those there to exchange views, learn about others' experiences, lay bare the problems ahead for hardback trade publishing, as well as the rewards of working with books. To judge from the attendance (and discounting the inevitable hoopla), the trade is alive and well publishing, buying and selling is not materially (it would seem) affected by the recession. It seemed to be otherwise down at the Old Customs House in the Battery where the small presses held their Second Annual Book Fair at the same time as ABA. . . . but more of that next week.

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Correspondence

Labeling African Polities

To the editors:

While I generally admire Milton Viorst's perceptive and informative reporting on African politics, he is guilty of perpetuating a European myth about the African past when he writes that "the 'nation' is a European concept, imposed upon . . . [an African] . . . tribal culture." ("Arabs vs. Africans," *TNR*, May 24, 1975.) Numerous pre-colonial African societies were "nations," meeting every criterion for nationhood applicable to their European counterparts: each incorporated a community of people sharing significant elements of a linguistic, historical and cultural heritage as well as institutions of a state to articulate these elements. Pre-19th century Europeans, in fact, customarily and accurately referred to African polities like Ashanti, the Kongo, Ethiopia, Benin as "nations" or "kingdoms," and the term "tribe" came into extensive use only within the last 150 years when racist ideas about Africa and Africans took their sharp upswing. Its usage was clearly pejorative in intent, the implication being that African societies were less "civilized"—more savage—than those of the Europeans who increasingly were infringing imperialistically on the African continent.

Leo Spitzer
Assistant Professor of History
Dartmouth College

In reply:

I would not presume to challenge Prof. Spitzer's historical erudition but I think it's fair to note that, while he is defining "nation" anthropologically, I use the term to refer to the political system superimposed by Europe on African social organization. The Ashanti may have been a "nation," as Prof. Spitzer says, but Europe drew Africa's internal boundaries and organized its governments, without much reference to Ashanti characteristics. Prof. Spitzer, incidentally, may be correct about the racist origins of the term "tribe," but it's the word Africans currently use, with no apparent discomfort.

Milton Viorst

Kudos

To the editors:

Many thanks for your fine editorial on the Michigan case ("Michigan's New Poison," *TNR* Apr. 26). I have been a reader of your magazine for many years. (I am over 97 years of age!)

W. W. Switzer
Walla Walla, Wash.

Kauffmann, *from page 20*

Midwest and the East, from outside the film world, so that the Hollywood dream was shown as a trans-American nightmare. No such representation is built here. The young daughter's wildness is easily recognizable as a contemporary problem, but not an American one; a European Nobel prize writer has told me of similar problems with his children. The ennui about infidelity—good heavens, the very phrase sounds "continental", not specifically American.

I don't mean to beat a film with an interview that its director was foolish enough to give. But *Night Moves* is a ragged, rambling, ponderously inflated detective story, and it seems to me typical that its shortcomings should be excused by its director as intellectually purposeful when the result is simply professionally sloppy. (One last reference to that interview. "Really," says Penn of the US, "it's a silly country." One doesn't have to be exactly jingoist to reply: "As compared with which Olympian country? Liechtenstein?")

Penn has directed with true distinction in the past. Whatever one's ultimate judgment of *Bonnie and Clyde* and *Little Big Man*, the making of them was hardly commonplace. *Night Moves*, however, is made without cinematic distinction, even though the fine Dede Allen was, as usual, Penn's editor. Even his usual touch with actors wobbles. With Hackman he does well. The casting of Janet Ward, a theater veteran, as the divorcée was acute, and her performance is exact. But Susan Clark and Jennifer Warren, as Hackman's wife and the stepfather's mistress, are affected and uninteresting.

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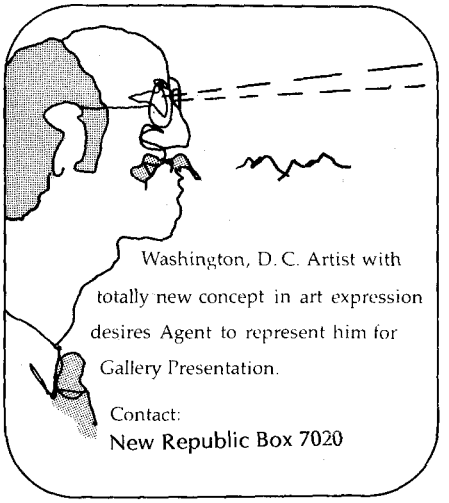

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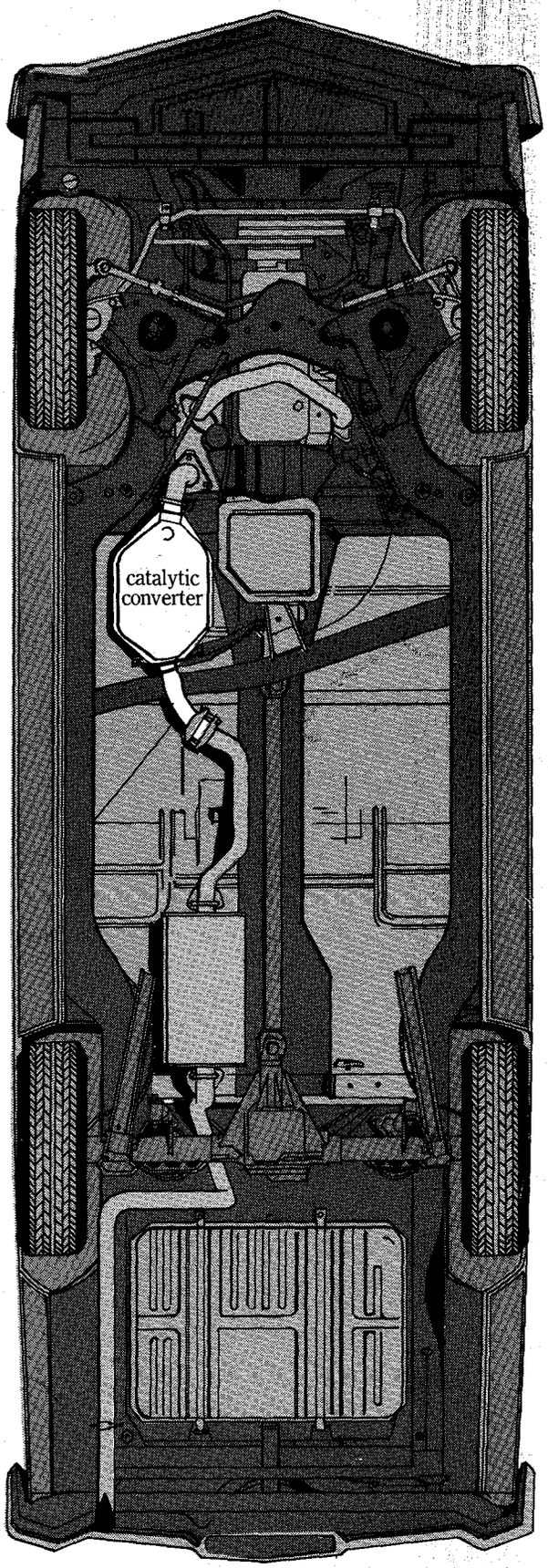

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